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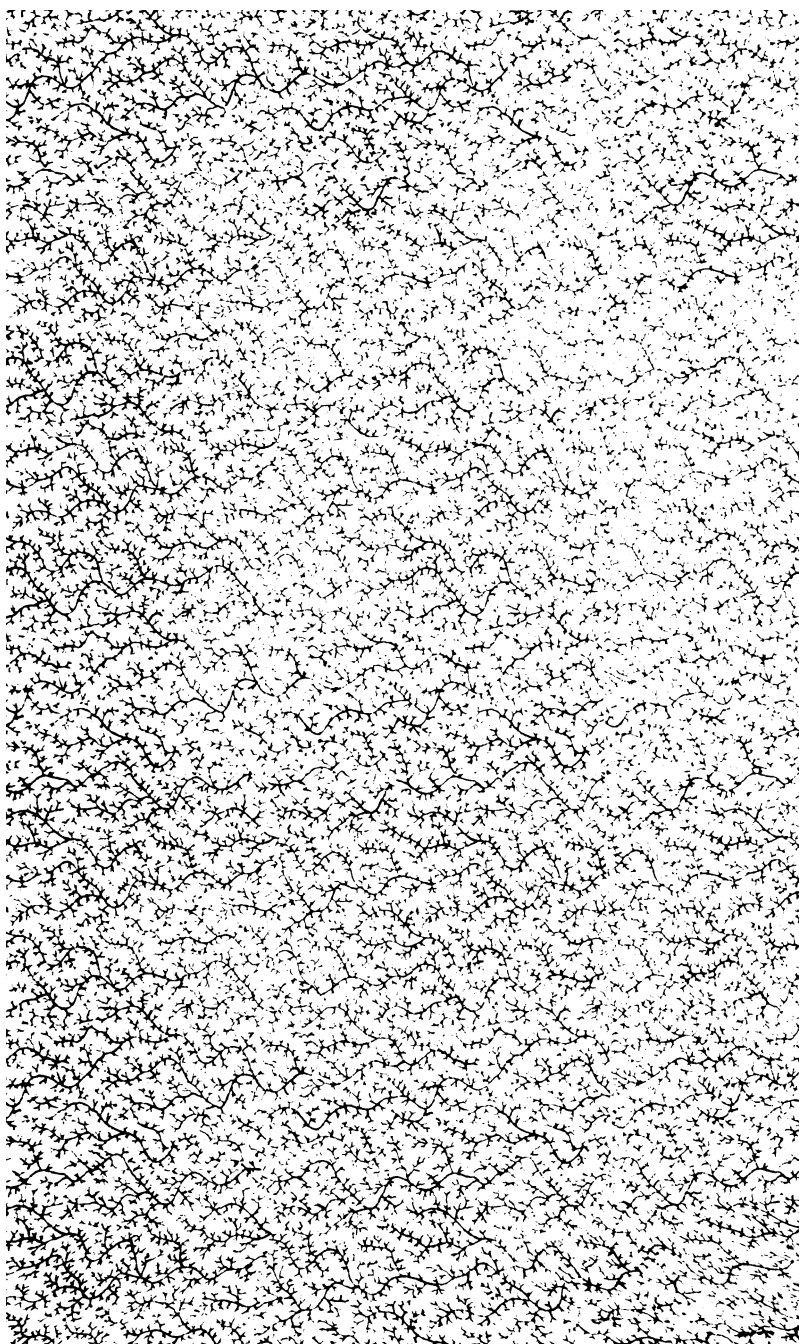
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SPECIMENS
OF THE
BRITISH CRITICS.

BY
CHRISTOPHER NORTH
(JOHN WILSON).

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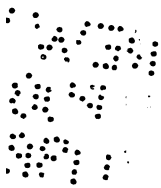
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NORTH'S SPECIMENS
OF THE
BRITISH CRITICS.

DRYDEN.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

POETRY, according to Lord Bacon a Third Part of Learning, must be a social interest of momentous power. That wisest of men—so our dear friends may have heard—extols it above history and above philosophy, as the more divine in its origin, the more immediately and intimately salutary and sanative in its use. Are not Shakspeare and Milton two of our greatest moral teachers? CRITICISM opens to us the poetry we possess; and, like a magnanimous kingly protector, shelters and fosters all its springing growths. What is criticism as a science? Essentially, this—FEELING KNOWN—that is, affections of the heart and imagination become understood subject-matter to the self-conscious intelligence. Must feeling perish because intelligence sounds its depths? Quite the reverse. Greatest minds are those in which, in and out of poetry, the understanding contemplates the will. Then first the soul has its proper strength. Disorderly passions are then tamed, and become the massy pillars of high-built virtue. Criticism? it is a shape of self-intuition. Confession and penitence, in the church, are a moral and a religious criticism. The imagination is less august and solemn, but of the same character. The first age of the

world lived by divine instincts; the latter must by reason. How, then, shall we possess the poetry of our being, unless we guard and arm it? If it be a benign, holy, potent faculty, nevertheless it cannot, the most delicate of all our faculties, sustain itself in the strife of opinions raging and thundering around. Then, if it should rightly hold dominion over us, let legislative opinion acknowledge, establish, and fortify that impaled territory. The temper, of the times is, in sundry respects, favourable, notwithstanding its too frequent possession by an incensed political spirit. Has there not been for half a century a spontaneous, an ardent, a loving return in literature, of our own and all countries, to the old and great in the productions of the human mind—to nature, with all her fountains? Does not the spirit of man, in the great civilized nations, at this day, travail with desire of knowing itself, its laws, its conditions, its means, its powers, its hopes? It studies, with irregular, often blind and perverted, efforts; but still it studies—itself. And is not criticism, when it speaks, much bolder, more glowing and generous, ampler-spirited, more inspiring, and withal more inquiring and philosophical? During the whole period we speak of, poetry and criticism—in nature near akin—with occasional complaints and quarrels, have flourished amicably together, side by side. Both have been strong, healthy and good. Prigs of both kinds—the pert and the pompous—will keep prating about the shallowness and superficiality of periodical criticism—deep enough to drown the whole tribe in its very folds. They call for systems. Why will they not be contented with the system of the universe?—of which they know not that periodical criticism is a conspicuous part. Every other year the nations without telescopes see the rising of some new, bright, particular star. Comets, with tails like O'Connell, are so common as to lose attraction, and blaze by weekly into undiscoverable realms. We have constructed an Orrery of Ebony, which we mean to exhibit at the next great cattle-show, displaying, in their luminous order, the orbs and orbits of all the heavenly bodies. In the centre—but this is not the time for such high revelations. We have now another purpose; and, leaving all those golden urns to yield light at their leisure, we desire you to take a look along with us at the choice critics of other days, waked by our potent voice from the long-gathering dust. In our plainer style, we beg, ladies and gentlemen, to draw your attention to a series of

articles in *Blackwood*, of which this is Alpha. Omega is intended for a Christmas present to your great-grandchildren.

Ay, there were giants in those days, as well as in these—also much dwarfs. But we shall not lose ourselves with you in the darkness of antiquity—one longish stride backwards of some hundred and fifty years or so, and then let us leisurely look about us for the critics. Who comes here? A grenadier—GLORIOUS JOHN. Him Scott, Hallam, Macaulay, have pronounced, each in his own peculiar and admirable way, to have been, in criticism, “a light to his people.” Him Samuel Johnson called “a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critic and a poet.”

“Dryden,” says the sage, in a splendid eulogium on his prose writings, “may be properly considered as the father of English criticism—as the writer who first taught us to determine, upon principles, the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and never deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the rules of propriety had neglected to teach them.” And he adds wisely—“To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his cotemporaries; and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another.” Let us, then, examine some of Dryden’s expositions of principles; and first, those on which he defends Heroic Verse in Rhyme, as the best language of the tragic drama.

This can be done effectually only by following him wherever he has treated the subject, and by condensing all his opinions into one consecutive argument.

His first play, (a comedy,) “*The Wild Gallant*,” was brought on the stage in February, 1662-3, and with indifferent success, though he has told us that it was more than once the divertisement of Charles II, by his own command, and a favourite with “the Castlemain.” “*The Rival Ladies*” (a tragi-comedy) was acted and published in the year following, and the serious scenes are executed in rhyme. Of its success we know nothing in particular; but Sir Walter thinks that the flowing verse into which some part of the dialogue is thrown, with the strong point and antithesis which all along distinguished his style, especially his argumentative poetry, tended to redeem

the credit of the author of the "Wild Gallant." Up to this time Dryden, now in his thirty-third year, had not written much; but in his "Heroic Stanzas on the death of Oliver Cromwell," "Astrea Redux, or Poem on the Happy Restoration and Return of his Sacred Majesty," and "A Panegyric on his Coronation," he had not only shown his measureless superiority to the Spratts and Wallers—poetasters of the same class after all, though Spratt was always but a small fish, while Waller was long thought like a whale—but manifested a vigour of thought and expression that gave assurance of a veritable poet. In those noble compositions he exults in his conscious power of numerous verse; and, like an eagle in the middle element, sweeps along majestically on easy wings. In "The Rival Ladies," the rhymed dialogue is exceedingly graceful, the blank verse somewhat cumbrous; and, in his dedication to the Earl of Orrery, he justifies himself "for following the new way; I mean, of writing scenes *in verse*." It may here, once for all, be remarked, that in all his disquisitions, by "verse" he usually means rhyme as opposed to blank verse. "To speak properly," he says, "it is not so much a new way amongst us, as an old way revived; for many years before Shakspeare's plays was the tragedy of 'Queen Gorboduc,' in English verse, written by that famous Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Earl of Dorset." Dryden here shows how little conversant he then was with the old English drama. For the tragedy of "Ferrex and Porrex" was first surreptitiously published under the title of "Gorboduc," who is not Queen, but King of England; and it is not written in rhyme, but, excepting the choruses, in blank verse; while Sackville's part of the play comprehends only the last two acts, of themselves sufficient to place him in the highest order of Noble Authors. "But supposing," he continues, "our countrymen had not received this writing till of late, shall we oppose ourselves to the most polished and civilized nations of Europe? * * * All the Spanish and Italian tragedies I have yet seen are writ in rhyme. * * * Shakspeare (who, with some errors not to be avoided in that age, *had undoubtedly a larger soul of poetry than ever any of our nation*), was the first who, to shun the pains of continual rhyming, invented that kind of writing which we call blank verse, but the French more properly *prose mesurée*; into which the English tongue so naturally glides, that in writing prose it is hardly to be avoided." Here, again, it is hardly indeed worth while to remark, is

another mistake; Marlow and several other dramatists having used blank verse (but how inferior to the divine man's!) before Shakspeare. Coleridge somewhere quotes a verse or two forming itself in prose composition as a rarity and a fault; but, though it had better perhaps be avoided, and though its frequent recurrence would be offensive, yet when words in their natural order do form a verse, it might be difficult to give a good reason why they may not be permitted to do so, more especially if they are not felt to be a verse insulated among the circumfluent prose. From the very best prose we could pick out thousands of single verses, which are to be found only when you seek for them; and not from rich prose only like Coleridge's own or Jeremy Taylor's, but from the poorest, like Dr. Blair's or Gerald's of Aberdeen. Dryden, says he cannot "but admire how some men should perpetually stumble in a way so easy"—that is, as blank verse—"into which the English tongue so naturally glides," and should strive to attain it by inverting the order of the words, to make the "blanks" sound more heroically—as, for example, instead of "Sir, I ask your pardon," "Sir, I your pardon ask." And adds—"I should judge him to have little command of English, whom the necessity of a rhyme should force often upon this rock; though sometimes it cannot easily be avoided; and, indeed, *this is the only inconvenience with which rhyme can be charged.*" In this lively style does he pursue his argument in favour of rhyme. For this it is which makes its adversaries say *rhyme is not natural!* But the fault lies with the poet who is not master of his art, and either makes a vicious choice of words, or places them, for rhyme's sake, so unnaturally as no man would in ordinary speech. But when it is so judiciously ordered that the first word in the verse seems to beget the second, and that again the next, till that becomes the last word in the line, which, in the negligence of prose, would be so, it must then be granted, that rhyme has all the advantages of prose—*besides its own.*

"Glorious John" (who must have been laughing in his sleeve) then declares, that the "excellence and dignity of it were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it;" that it was afterwards "followed in the epic by Sir John Denham, in his 'Cooper's Hill,' a poem which your lordship knows, for the majesty of the style, is, and ever will be, the exact standard of good writing;" and that we are "acknowledging for the noblest use of it to Sir William D'Avenant, who at once

brought it upon the stage, *and made it perfect in the Siege of Rhodes!*"

Having thus carried things all his own way, he triumphantly declares, that the advantages which rhyme has over blank verse are so many, that "it were lost time to name them." And then, with fresh vigour, he sets himself to name some of the chief—and first, that one illustrated by Sir Philip Sidney in his "Defence of Poesy," "the help it brings to memory, which rhyme so knits up by the affinity of sound, that by remembering the last word in one line, we often call to mind both the verses." Then, in the quickness of repartees (which, in discursive scenes, fall very often) it has, he says, so particular a grace, and is so aptly united to them, that the sudden smartness of the answer, and the exactness of the rhyme, set off the beauty of each other.

But its greatest benefit of all, according to Dryden, is, that it bounds and circumscribes the fancy. The great easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant; he is tempted to say many things which might be better omitted, or at least shut up in fewer words. But when the difficulty of artificial rhyming is interposed; where the poet commonly confines his verse to his couplet, and must continue that verse in such words that the rhyme shall naturally follow them, not they the rhyme, the fancy then gives leisure to the judgment to come in; which, seeing so heavy a task imposed, is ready to cut off all unnecessary expenses. And this furnishes a complete answer, he maintains, to the ordinary objection, that rhyme is only an embroidery of verse, to make that which is ordinary in itself pass for excellent with less examination. For that which most regulates the fancy, and gives the judgment its basiest employment, is like to bring forth the richest and clearest thoughts. The poet examines that most which he produces with the greatest leisure, and which he knows must pass the severest test of the audience, because they are aptest to have it ever in the memory. In conclusion, he winds up skilfully by applying all he has said to "a fit subject"—that is, an Heroic Play. For neither must the argument alone, but the characters and persons, be great and noble, otherwise rhymed verse would be out of place, which, for the reasons assigned, is manifestly suited for the utterance of lofty sentiments, and for occasions of dignity and importance. Heroic Plays were then all the rage, and Dryden was meditating to enter on that career which for many years occupied

his genius, not essentially dramatic, to the exclusion of other kinds of poetry in which he afterwards excelled all competitors.

Sir Robert Howard's Heroic Play, the "Indian Queen," "a part of which was written by Dryden," and the whole revised and corrected no doubt, especially in the article of versification, was acted in 1664 with great applause. "It presented," says Sir Walter, "battles and sacrifices on the stage, aerial demons singing in the air, and the god of dreams ascending through a trap, the least of which has often saved a worse tragedy." Evelyn, in his *Memoirs*, has recorded, that the scenes were the richest ever seen in England, or perhaps elsewhere, upon a public stage. Dryden, by its reception, was encouraged to engraft on it another drama called the "Indian Emperor"—a continuation of the tale,—which had the most ample success, and till a revolution in the public taste, retained possession of the stage. Soon after its publication, Sir Robert Howard, in a peevish preface to some plays of his, chose to answer what Dryden had said in behalf of verse in his *Epistle Dedicatory* to his "Rival Ladies," and not only without any mention of his name, but without any allusion to the "Indian Emperor," while he bestowed the most extravagant eulogies on the heroic plays of my Lord of Orrery—"in whose verse the greatness of the majesty seems unsullied with the cares, and the inimitable fancy descends to us in such easy expressions, that they seem as if neither had ever been added to the other, but both together flowing from a height, like birds so high that use no balancing wings, but only with an easy care preserve a steadiness in motion. But this particular happiness among those multitudes which that excellent person is an owner of, does not convince my reason but employ my wonder; yet I am glad that such verse has been written for the stage, since it has so happily exceeded those whom we seemed to imitate. But while I give these arguments against verse, I may seem faulty that I have not only written ill ones, but written any; but since it was the fashion I was resolved, as in all indifferent things, not to appear singular—the danger of the vanity being greater than the error; and therefore, I followed it as a fashion, though very far off." Sir Robert appears to have been in the sulks, for some cause not now known, with his great brother-in-law; and was pleased to punish him by thus publicly pretending ignorance of his existence as an heroic play-wright. Yet the

"*Annus Mirabilis*" was about this time dedicated to Sir Robert; and only about a year before, John had had a helping hand with the "*Indian Queen*." My Lord of Orrery must have been a proud man to have his gouty toe so fervently kissed by the jealous rivals. "The muses," Dryden had said in his dedication to that nobleman, "have seldom employed your thoughts but when some violent fit of the gout has snatched you from affairs of state; and, like the priestess of Apollb, you never come to deliver your oracles but unwillingly and in torments. So we are obliged to your lordship's misery for our delight. You treat us with the cruel pleasure of a Turkish triumph, where those who cut and wound their bodies, sing songs of victory as they pass, and divert others with their own sufferings. Other men endure their diseases—your lordship only can enjoy them." Dryden, however, was not disposed to stomach Sir Robert's supercilious silence, and took a noble revenge in his "*Essay on Dramatic Poesy*."

This celebrated *Essay* was first published at the close of 1668; and the writing of it, Dryden tells us, in a dedication, many years afterwards, to the Earl of Dorset, "served as an amusement to me in the country, when the violence of the last plague had driven me from the town. Seeing, then, our theatres shut up, I was engaged in these kind of thoughts with the same delight with which men think upon their absent mistresses." It is in the form of dialogue; under the feigned appellations of *Lisideius*, *Crites*, *Eugenius*, and *Neander*, the speakers are Sir Charles Sedly, Sir Robert Howard, Lord Buckhurst, and Dryden. Nothing can exceed the grace with which the dialogue is conducted—the choice of scene is most happy—and the description of it in the highest degree striking and poetical.

"It was that memorable day, in the first summer of the late war, when our navy engaged the Dutch; a day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed fleets which any age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the globe, the commerce of nations, and the riches of the universe. While these vast floating bodies, on either side, moved against each other in parallel lines, and our countrymen, under the happy conduct of his Royal Highness, went breaking, little by little, into the line of the enemies, the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the city; so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful

suspense of the event which they knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the park, some cross the river, some down it, all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.

“Amongst the rest, it was the fortune of Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander, to be in company together; three of them persons whom their wit and quality have made known to all the town, and whom I have chose to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a narration as I am going to make of their discourse.

“Taking, then, a barge, which a servant of Lisideius had provided for them, they made haste to shoot the bridge, and left behind them that great fall of waters which hindered them from hearing what they desired; after which, having disengaged themselves from many vessels which rode at anchor in the Thames, and almost blocked up the passage towards Greenwich, they ordered the waterman to let fall their oars more gently; and then every one favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceived the air to break about them like the noise of distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney—those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror which they had betwixt the fleets. After they had attentively listened till such time as the sound, by little and little, went from them, Eugenius, lifting up his head, and taking notice of it, was the first who congratulated to the rest that happy omen of our nation’s victory; adding, that we had but this to desire in confirmation of it, that we might hear no more of that noise which was now leaving the English coast. When the rest had concurred in the same opinion, Crites, a person of sharp judgment, and somewhat too delicate a taste in wit, which the world hath mistaken in him for ill-nature, said, smiling to us, that if the concernment of this battle had not been so exceeding great, he could scarce have wished the victory at the price he knew he must pay for it, being subject to the reading and hearing of so many ill verses as he was sure would be made on that subject; adding, that no argument could ’scape some of these eternal rhymers, who watch a battle with more diligence than the ravens and birds of prey, and the worst of them surest to be first in upon the quarry; while the better able, either out of modesty writ not

at all, or set that due value upon their poems, as to let them be often desired and long expected. There are some of those impertinent people of whom you speak, answered Lisiideus, who, to my knowledge, are already so provided either way, that they can produce not only a panegyric upon the victory, but, if need be, a funeral elegy upon the Duke, wherein, after they have crowned his valour with many laurels, they will at last deplore the odds under which he fell, concluding that his courage deserved a better destiny. All the company smiled at the conceit of Lisiideus; but Crites, more eager than before, began to make particular exceptions against some writers, and said the public magistrates ought to send betimes to forbid them; and that it concerned the peace and quiet of all honest people that ill poets should be as well silenced as seditious preachers."

We may perhaps have occasion, by and by, to notice other important topics spiritedly and eloquently discussed by these choice spirits in the barge; meanwhile our business is with the argument, "rhyme *versus* blank verse," between Crites and Neander. Crites maintains, sometimes in the very words, Sir Robert's views in the Preface to his plays, in which he had animadverted on Dryden's dedication to the "Rival Ladies," while Neander combats them; and it may be observed, that the worthy Baronet is made to speak forcibly and well—much better, indeed, on the whole, than he does in his own preface. From beginning to end there cannot be imagined a more fair and gentlemanly dialogue. But first, we cannot resist giving the very beautiful close.

"Neander was pursuing this discussion so eagerly, that Eugenius had called to him twice or thrice ere he took notice that the barge stood still, and that they were at the foot of Somerset stairs, where they had appointed it to land. The company were all sorry to separate so soon, though a great part of the evening was already spent; and stood awhile looking back on the water, upon which the moonbeams played, and made it appear like floating quicksilver. At last they went up through a crowd of French people, who were merrily dancing in the open air, and nothing concerned for the noise of guns which had alarmed the town that afternoon. Walking three together to the Piazza, they parted there; Eugenius and Lisiideus to some pleasant appointment they had made, Crites and Neander to their several lodgings."

But now to the argument. Crites, who is not more long-

winded than may be permitted to a polite proser, at least on the Thames of a summer evening, somewhat condensed, reasoneth thus.

A play being the imitation of nature, dialogue is there presented as the effect of sudden thought; and since no man without premeditation speaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the stage. The fancy may be elevated to a higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary discourse, for men of excellent and quick parts may speak noble things extempore; but surely not when fettered with rhyme, for what more unnatural than to present the most free way of speaking in that which is the most constrained? The Greek tragedians, therefore, wrote in iambics, the kind of verse nearest to prose, which with us is blank verse.

The champions of rhyme say that the quickness of repartees receives an ornament from it in argumentative scenes. But do men not only light on a sudden upon the wit but the rhyme too? Then must they be born poets. If they do not seem in the dialogue to make rhymes whether they will or no, it will look rather like the design of two than the answer of one—as if your actors hold intelligence together, and perform their tricks like fortune-tellers by confederacy. The hand of art will be too visible. Neither is it any answer to say that, however you manage it, 'tis still known to be a play; for a play is still an imitation of nature, and one can be deceived only with a probability of truth. The mind of man does naturally tend to truth, and the nearer anything comes to the imitation of it, the more readily will the imagination believe.

Rhyme, it is said, circumscribes a quick and luxuriant fancy which would extend itself too far on every subject, did not the labour which is required to well-turned and polished rhyme set bounds to it. But he who wants judgment to confine his fancy in blank verse, may want it as much in rhyme; and he who has it will avoid errors in both kinds. Latin verse was as great a confinement to the imagination as rhyme; yet Ovid's fancy was not limited by it, and Virgil needed it not to bind his. In our own language, Ben Jonson confined himself to what ought to be said, even in the liberty of blank verse; and Corneille, the most judicious of the French poets, is still varying the same sense a hundred ways, and dwelling eternally on the same subject, though confined by rhyme.

Such is the substance of Crites' answer to Dryden's De-

fence of Rhyme ; and Neander, before replying, begs it to be understood that he excludes all comedy from his defence, and that he does not deny that blank verse may be also used ; but he asserts that, in Serious Plays, where the subject and characters are great, and the plot unmixed with mirth, which might allay or divert those concerns which are produced, rhyme is there as natural, and more effective, than blank verse—for what other conditions, he asks, are required to make rhyme natural in itself, besides an election of apt words, and a right disposition of them ? The due choice of your words expresses your sense naturally, and the due placing them adapts the rhyme to it. If both the words and rhyme be apt, one verse cannot be made merely for the sake of the other, as Crites had urged ; for supposing there be a dependence of sense betwixt the first line and the second, then, in the natural position of the words, the latter line must of necessity flow from the former ; and if there be no dependence, yet still the due ordering of words makes the last line as natural in itself as the other. A good poet, he affirms, never establishes the first line till he has sought out such a rhyme as may fit the verse, already prepared to heighten the second. Many times the close of the sense falls into the middle of the next verse, or further off ; and he may often avail himself of the same advantages in English which Virgil had in Latin—he may break off in the hemistich, and begin another line. The not observing these two last things, makes plays which are writ in verse so tedious ; for though most commonly the sense is to be confined to the couplet, yet nothing that does run in the same channel can please always. 'Tis like the murmuring of a stream, which, not varying in the fall, causes at first attention, at last drowsiness. Variety of cadence is the best rule, the greatest help to the actor, and refreshment of the audience.

If, then, verse may be made natural in itself, how becomes it unnatural in a play ? The stage, you say, is the representation of nature, and no man in ordinary conversation speaks in rhyme. True ; but neither does he in blank verse. All the difference between them, when they are both good, is the sound in one which the other wants ; and if so, the sweetness of it, and other advantages, handled in the Preface to the "Rival Ladies," all stand good.

The dialogue of plays, you say, is presented as the effect of sudden thought ; but that no man speaks *extempore* in

rhyme, which cannot therefore be proper in dramatic poetry, unless we could suppose all men born so much more than poets. But it must not be forgotten that the question regards the nature of a Serious Play, which is indeed the representation of nature, but nature wrought up to an high pitch. The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions, are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them with proportion to verisimilitude. Tragedy is wont to image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons; and to portray these exactly, heroic rhyme is nearest nature, as being the noblest kind of modern verse. Verse, it is true, is not the effect of sudden thought; but this hinders not that sudden thought may be represented in verse, since these thoughts are such as must be higher than nature can raise them without premeditation, especially to a continuance of them even out of verse; and consequently you cannot imagine them to have been sudden, either in the poet or the actors. A play to be like nature is to be set above it; as statues which are placed on high are made greater than the life, that they may descend to the sight in their just proportion.

But rhyme, it has been argued, appears most unnatural in repartees or short replies, when he who answers (it being presumed he knew not what the other would say, yet) makes up that part of the verse which was left incomplete, and supplies both the sound and the measure of it. This, 'tis said, looks rather like the confederacy of two than the answer of one. But suppose the repartee were made in blank verse, is not the measure as often supplied there as in rhyme?—the latter half of the hemistich as commonly made up, or a second line subjoined, as a reply to the former? But suppose it allowed to look like a confederacy. What more beautiful than a well-contrived dance? You see there the united design of many persons to make up one figure: after they have separated themselves in many petty divisions, they rejoin one by one into a group: the confederacy is plain among them, for chance could never produce anything so beautiful, and yet there is nothing in it that shocks your sight. True, then, the hand of wit appears in repartee, as it must in all kinds of verse. When, with the quiet and poignant brevity of it, there mingle the cadency and sweetness of verse—
“the soul of the hearer has nothing more to desire.”

Rhyme was said by its defender to be a help to the poet's

judgment, by putting bounds to a wild overflowing fancy. And it was answered by the admirer of blank verse, that he who wants judgment in the liberty of his poesy, may as well show the defect of it when he is confined to verse ; for he who has judgment will avoid errors, and he who has it not will commit them in all kind of writing. Granted that he who has judgment so profound, strong, and infallible that he needs no help to keep it always poised and right, will commit no faults in rhyme or out of it. But where is that judgment to be found ? Take it, therefore, as it is found in the best poets. Judgment is indeed the master workman in a play ; but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance, and rhyme is one of them—it is a rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise loosely and irregularly—it is, in short, a slow and painful but the surest kind of working. Second thoughts being usually the best, as receiving the maturest digestion from judgment, and the last and most mature product of these thoughts being artful and laboured verse, it may well be inferred that verse is a great help to a luxuriant fancy, and that is what the argument opposed was to evince.

Sir Robert, though always made to speak well in the dialogue, was yet made to speak on the losing side ; and in an address to the reader, prefixed to "The Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma," a tragedy published soon after, having, by way of retaliation, sharply criticised some of Neander's dogmas about the drama, brought down on himself a cool but cutting castigation—more severe than was merited by so small an offence. His retort, in as far as the question of rhyme or blank verse is concerned, was, however, to say the best of it, very feeble. "I cannot, therefore, but beg leave of the reader to take a little notice of the great pains the author of an Essay of Dramatic poetry has taken to prove rhyme as natural in a Serious Play, and more effectual, than blank verse : Thus he states the question, but pursues that which he calls natural in a wrong application ; for 'tis not the question, whether rhyme or not rhyme be best or most natural for a grave or serious subject ; but what is nearest the nature of that which it presents. Now, after all the endeavours of that ingenious person, a play will still be supposed to be a composition of several persons speaking *extempore*, and it is as certain, that good verses are the hardest things

that can be imagined to be so spoken ; so that if any will be pleased to impose the rule of measuring things to be the best by being nearest to nature, it is proved, by consequence, that which is most remote from the thing supposed, must needs be most improper ; and therefore I may justly say, that both I and the question were equally mistaken, for I do own, I had rather read good verses than either blank verse or prose, and therefore the author did himself injury, if he like verse so well in plays, to lay down rules and raise arguments only unanswerable against himself."

We had rather that Dryden should answer this than we ; for much of it eludes our comprehension. In his "Dèfence of the Essay on Dramatic Poesy," he replies thus :—"A play will still be supposed to be a composition of several persons speaking extempore," quoth Sir Robert ; "I must move leave to dissent from his opinion," re-quoth John ; "for if I am not deceived, a play is supposed to be the work of the poet, imitating or representing the conversation of several persons ; and this I think to be as clear as he thinks the contrary." There he has the baronet on the hip ; and gives him a throw. He then makes bold to prove this paradox—that one great reason why prose is not to be used in Serious Plays is, "because it is too near the nature of converse." Thus, in "Bartholomew Fair," or the lowest kind of comedy, where he was not to go out of prose, Ben does yet so raise his matter, in that prose, as to render it delightful, which he could never have performed had he only said or done those very things that are daily spoken or practised in the fair ; for then the fair itself would be as full of pleasure to an inquiring person as the play, which we manifestly see it is not. "But he hath made an excellent lazar of it. The copy is of price, though the original be vile." Even in the lowest prose comedy, then, the matter and the wording must be lifted out of nature—as *we* should now say, idealized. In "Catiline" and "Sejanus," again, where the argument is great, Ben sometimes ascends into rhyme ; and had his genius been proper for rhyme—which Dryden more than once asserts it was not—"it is probable he would have adorned those subjects with that kind of writing. Thus prose," he finely says, "though the rightful prince, yet is by common consent deposed as too weak for the government of Serious Plays ; and he failing, there now start up two competitors, one the nearer in blood, which is blank verse ; the other more fit for the ends of ge-

verment, which is rhyme. Blank verse is, indeed, the nearer prose, but he is blemished with the weakness of his predecessors. Rhyme (for I will deal clearly) has somewhat of the usurper in him; but he is brave and generous, and his dominion pleasing."

It was then, "for the reason of delight," that the ancients wrote all their tragedies in verse—and not in prose; because it was most remote from conversation. Rhyme had not then been invented. But again he reminds his adversary, that it seems to have been adopted by the general consent of poets in all modern languages—and that almost all their Serious Plays are written in it, which, though it be no demonstration that therefore they ought to be so, yet at least the practice first, and the continuation of it, show that it attained the end, which was to please. It is thus that Dryden deals with Sir Robert, as if blank verse in Serious Plays had not a leg to stand on. Yet throughout he preserves a wonderful air of candour and moderation, as most becoming the victorious champion of rhyme. As, for example, where he allows that, whether it be natural or not in plays, is a problem not demonstrable on either side. But in reference to Sir Robert's acknowledgment that he had rather read good verse than prose, he adds triumphantly, "that is enough for me; for if all the enemies of verse will confess as much, I shall not need to prove that it is natural. I am satisfied if it cause delight; for delight is the chief, if not the only end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights. It is true, that to imitate well is the poet's work; but to affect the soul, and to excite the passions, and above all, to move admiration (which is the delight of Serious Plays), a bare imitation will not serve. The converse, therefore, which a poet is to imitate, must be heightened with all the arts and ornaments of poesy; and must be such as, strictly considered, could never be supposed spoken by any without premeditation."

In his various argument in defence of the use of rhyme on the stage, Dryden, we have seen, always speaks of its peculiar adaptation to "Serious Plays," or "Heroic Plays." In an essay thereon, prefixed to the "Conquest of Grenada," in the pride of success he says, "whether heroic verse ought to be admitted into Serious Plays, is not now to be disputed." And he again takes up the obstinate objection to rhyme, which he had not yet, it seems, battered to death, that it is

not so near conversation as prose, and therefore not so natural. But it is very clear to all who understand poetry, that Serious Plays ought not to imitate conversation too nearly. If nothing were to be traced above that level, the foundation of poetry would be destroyed. Once grant that thoughts may be exalted, and that images and actions may be raised above the life, and described in measure without rhyme, and that leads you insensibly from your principles; admit some latitude, and having forsaken the imitation of ordinary converse, where are you now? "You are gone beyond it, and to continue where you are, is to lodge in the open fields between two inns. You have lost that which you call natural, and have not acquired the last perfection of art. It was only custom, he says, which cozened us so long; we thought because Shakspeare and Fletcher went no further, that there the pillars of poetry were to be erected; that because they excellently described passion without rhyme, therefore rhyme was not capable of describing it. *But time has since convinced most men of that error.*"

What, then, according to Dryden's idea of it, was a serious or heroic play? An heroic play, he says, ought to be an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem; and, consequently, Love and Valour ought to be the subject of it. D'Avenant's astonishing "Siege of Rhodes"—formerly declared to be the *beau-ideal* of an heroic play—was, after all, it seems, wanting in fullness of plot, variety of character, and even beauty of style. Above all, it was not sufficiently great and majestic. He knew not, honest man, that, in a true heroic play, you ought to draw all things as far above the ordinary proportion of the stage, as that is beyond the common words and actions of human life. The play that imitates mere nature as she walks in this world, may be written in suitable language; but, as in epic poetry all poets have agreed that we shall behold the highest pattern of human life, so in the heroic play, modeled by the rules of an heroic poem, we must be shown only correspondent characters. Gods and spirits, too, are privileged to appear on such a stage, and so are drums and trumpets. But Dryden himself denies that he was the first to introduce representations of battles on the English stage, Shakspeare having set him the example; while Jonson, though he shows no battle, lets you hear in "Catiline," from behind the scenes, the shouts of fighting armies. War-like instruments, and some fighting on the stage, are indeed

necessary to produce the effects of a heroic play. They help the imagination to gain absolute dominion over the mind of an audience.

Were we to believe Dryden, his heroic plays were dramatic imitations of such epic poems as the *Iliad* and the *Æneid*. And he has the brazen-faced assurance to say, that the first image he had of *Alamanzor*, in the "Conquest of Grenada," was from the *Achilles* of Homer! The next was from Tasso's *Rinaldo*, and the third—*risum teneatis amici*—from the *Artaban* of *Monsieur Calpranede*! Unquestionably our English heroic plays were borrowed from the French—as these were the legitimate offspring of the dramas of *Calpranede* and *Scuderi*. But Dryden's compositions are unparalleled in any literature. Nature is systematically outraged in one and all—from beginning to end. Never was such mouthing seen and heard beneath moon and stars. Through the whole range of rant he rages like a man inspired. He is the emperor of bombast. Yet these plays contain many passages of powerful declamation—not a few of high eloquence; some that in their argumentative amplitude, if they do not reach, border on the sublime. Not are there wanting outbreaks of genuine passion among the utmost extravagances of false sentiment—when momentarily heroes and heroines warm into men and women, and for a few sentences confabulate like flesh and blood.

But it is with Dryden as a critic, not as a poet, that we have now to do; and we have said these few words about his heroic plays only in connection with our account of his argument in support of his doctrine with regard to heroic verse in rhyme. That blank verse is better adapted than any other for the drama, has been settled by Shakspeare. But though Dryden has driven his argument too far, till his doctrine, as he promulgates it, becomes untenable, as little do we doubt that he has made good this position, that there may be good plays in rhyme. His heroic plays are bad, not because they are in rhyme, but because they are absurd; the rhyme is their chief merit; 'tis not possible to dream what they had been in blank verse. True, that "All for Love" and "Don Sebastian" are in blank verse, and may be said, after a fashion, to be fine plays. But they are constructed on rational principles, and in them he was doing his best to write like Shakspeare. What reason is there for believing that those plays, in many respects excellent, are the better for not being in rhyme?

None whatever. Rhyme, in our opinion, would have given them both a superior charm. In his heroic plays, it often carries us along with absurdities which we know not whether we should call tame or wild; it gives an air of originality to trivial commonplaces; it embellishes what is vigorous, and invigorates what is beautiful; and among events and characters alike unnatural, its music sustains our flagging interest, and enables us to read on. There can be no doubt, that in representations on the stage, the same cause must have been most effective on audiences accustomed to that kind of pleasure, and who delighted in rhyme, to them at once a necessary and a luxury of life. "Aurengzebe," the last of his rhyming plays, is, to our mind, little if at all inferior to "All for Love," or "Don Sebastian;" and we know that it was most successful on the stage.

Sir Walter says, "that during the space which occurred between the writing of the 'Conquest of Grenada,' and 'Aurengzebe,' Dryden's researches into the nature and causes of harmony of versification, led him to conclude that the drama ought to be emancipated from the fetters of rhyme—and that the perusal of Shakspeare, on whom Dryden had now turned his attention, led him to feel that something further might be attained in tragedy than the expression of exaggerated sentiment in smooth verse, and that the scene ought to represent, not a fanciful set of agents exerting their superhuman faculties in a fairy land of the poet's own creation, but human characters acting from the direct and energetic influence of human passions, with whose emotions the audience might sympathize, because akin to the feelings of their own hearts. When Dryden had once discovered that fear and pity were more likely to be excited by other causes than the logic of metaphysical love, or the dictates of fantastic honour, he must have found that rhyme sounded as unnatural in the dialogue of characters drawn upon the usual scale of humanity, as the plate and mail of chivalry would have appeared on the persons of the actors." All this is finely said; but does it not assume the point in question? Dryden may have learned at last from the study of Shakspeare (in whom, however, he was well read many years before, as witness his Essay on Dramatic Poesy), that "something further might be attained in tragedy than the expression of exaggerated sentiment in smooth verse." But we do not see the necessity of the inference, "that rhyme sounded unnatural in the dialogue of characters drawn upon

the usual scale of humanity." Is rhyme self-evidently unnatural in the expression, in verse, of strong and deep human passion? To that question put thus generally, the right answer is—no. And is it, then, necessarily unnatural in the drama?

Like all great powers, that of rhyme is a secret past finding out. In itself a mere barbarous jingle, it yet gives perfection to speech. The music of versification has endless varieties of measures, and rhyme lends enchantment to them all. Not an affection, emotion, or passion of the soul that may not be soothed by its syllablings, enkindled or raised to rapture. Pity and terror, joy and grief, love and devotion, are all alike sensible of its influence; as the sweet similarities keep echoing through some artful strain, that all the while is thought by them who listed to come in simplicity from the unpremeditating heart. Songs, hymns, elegies, epicedia, epithalamia—rhyme rules alike all the shadowy tribes. The triumphant ode—the penitential psalm—wisdom's moral lesson—the philosophic strain "that vindicates the ways of God to man;" such is the range of rhyme, down all the depths of the pathetic, up all the heights of the sublime. It is yet unlimited. Where shall we find its bounds? Let us try.

In the Epos, the poet in person is the relater. But he hides his own personality in that of the Muse he invokes; and offers himself to his auditors as the voice only by which she speaks. She, the Muse, is thought to be throughout a faithful recorder; for she is supposed to have access to know all; and however marvelous may be the narrations, they are accepted with undoubting faith. Since she speaks, or rather sings, and the auditor only listens, the commonest and the most uncommon events are, in one respect, upon an even footing. For the hearer must picture them for himself. All are alike acted absent from the senses, and before the imagination alone. Hence the epic poet has an extraordinary facility afforded him for introducing into his work that order of representation which is called the marvelous. For it is just as easy to the hearer to set before his fancy a giant or a pigmy, as a man; the one-eyed monster Polyphemus, as the beautiful, the graceful, the swift, the strong, the sublime, the terrible Achilles. It is just as easy for him to transport himself in fancy to the summit of Olympus, to the palace of Jupiter, and to the council or to the banquet of the gods, or to the deep sea-caves where Thetis sits with her companion nymphs in

the hall of her father, the sea-god Nereus—as it is to remove himself from the festal hall, where the poet is singing to him and to the other guests, away to the camp of the Greeks, or to the court of Priam, or to the bower of Andromache. He has no more difficulty to think of Minerva darting, in the likeness of a hawk, from the snowy crest of Olympus to the shore of the Hellespont—or to imagine the thunderer in his celestial car, lashing on his golden-maned steeds that pace the clouds and the air, and waft him at the speed almost of a wish from the unfolding portals of Heaven to the summit of Mount Ida—than when he is called upon, in the midst of some totally different scene, to figure to himself a mortal hero, with waving crest, glittering in polished brass, advancing erect in his war-chariot, hurling his lance that misses his foe; and in return transpierced by that of his antagonist, falling backwards to the ground in his resounding arms, and groaning out his soul in the bloody dust. The truth is, that when you are called upon to see and to hear *within the mind*, you rejoice in the capacities of seeing and hearing that are thus unfolded in you, infinitely surpassing similar capacities which you possess in your bodily eye and ear; and therefore the stronger the demands that are made, the more readily even do you comply with them; and in this way, in part, we must understand the character that is impressed upon the *Iliad*, and the temper of mind in the hearer answering to the character. It is one of infinite liberty. The mind of the poet seems to be released from all bonds and from all bounds; and the temper in the hearer is the same. Another character, proper to Epic poetry, judging after its great model, the *Iliad*, is *universality*. In the direct narrative, we have gods and men, heaven, earth, sea, for seats of action—and, for a moment, a glimpse of hell. Recollect whilst the conflagration of war is raging, how the poet has found a moment, at the Scæan Gate, for the touching picture of an heroic father, a noble mother, and a babe in arms, scared at his father's dazzling and overshadowing helmet, who smiles, puts it from his head upon the ground, and lifts up the boy, with a prayer, to Jove. Sacrifices to the gods, games, funeral rites, come in the course of the relation; and because the scene of the poem is distracted with warfare, the great poet has found, in the Vulcanian sculptures on the shield of Achilles, place for images of peace—the labours of the husbandman; the mirthful gathering in of the vintage with dance and song; the hymeneal pomp led along the streets.

And in the similes, what pictures from animal life and manners! And then our enchantment is heightened by a prevailing duplication. Throughout, or nearly so, the transactions that are presented in the natural, are also presented in the supernatural. Thus we have earthly councils, heavenly councils; warring men, warring gods; kings of men, kings of gods; mortal husbands and wives, and sons and daughters; immortal husbands and wives, and sons and daughters. Palaces in heaven as on earth. The sea, in a manner, triplicates. Terrestrial steeds—celestial steeds—marine steeds! The natural and supernatural are united—when Achilles is half of mortal, half of immortal derivation; when heavenly coursers are yoked in the chariots of men; when Juno, for a moment, grants voice to the horse of Achilles; and the horse, whom Achilles has unjustly reproved, answers prophesying the death of the hero.

Why Homer made the *Iliad* in hexameters, no man can tell; but having done so, he thereby constituted for ever the proper metre of Greek—and Latin—Epic poetry. But what a multitude of subjects, how different from one another does that, and every other Epic poem, comprehend! Glory to the hexameter! it suits them all. Now, in every Epic poem, and in few more than in the *Iliad*, there are many dramatic scenes. But in the Greek tragic drama, the dialogue is mainly in iambs; for this reason, that iambs are naturally suited for the language of conversation. Be it so. Yet here in the Epic, the dialogue is felt to be as natural in hexameters as the heart of man can desire. Hear Agamemnon and Achilles. Call to mind that colloquy in Pelides' tent.

Rhyme is unknown in Greek; and it is of rhyme that we are treating, though you may not see our drift. From Homer, then, pass on to Ariosto and Tasso. They, too, are Epic poets who have charmed the world. Their poems may not have such a sweep as the *Iliad*, still their sweep is great. Rich in rhyme is their language—rich the stanza they delighted in—*ottava rima*, how rich the name! Is rhyme unnatural from the lips of their peers and paladins? No—an inspired speech. Is hexameter blank verse alone fit for the mouths of Greek heroes—eight-line stanzas of oft-recurring rhymes for the mouths of Italian? Gentle shepherd, tell me why.

But the "*Paradise Lost*" is in blank verse. It is. The fallen angels speak not in rhyme—nor Eve nor Adam. So

Milton willed. But Dante's Purgatory, and Hell, and Heaven, are in rhyme—ay, and in difficult rhyme, too—*terza rima*. Yet the damned speak it naturally—so do the blessed. How dreadful from Ugolino, how beautiful from Beatrice!

But the drama—the drama—the drama—is your cry—what say we to the drama? Listen, and you shall hear—

The Tragic Drama rose at Athens. The splendid and inexhaustible mythology of gods and heroes, which had supplied the Epic Muse with the materials of her magnificent relations, furnished the matter of a new species of poetry. A palace—or a temple—or a cave by the wild sea-shore, was painted; actors, representing by their attire, and their majestic demeanour, heroes and heroines of the old departed world; nay, upon high occasions, celestial gods and goddesses—trode the stage and spoke, in measured recitation, before assembled thousands of spectators, seated in wonder and awe-stricken expectation. The change to the poet in the manner of communicating with his hearers, alters the character of the composition. The stage trodden by living feet, the scenery, voices from human tongues varying with all the changes of emotion, impassioned gestures, and events no longer spoken of, but transacted in presence, before the eyes of the audience, are elements full of power, that claim for tragedy, and impose upon it, a character of its own. The heart is more interested, and the imagination less. Persons who accompany the whole business that is to be done, with speaking—a poem consisting of incessant dialogue—must disclose, with more precise and profounder discovery, the minds represented as engaged. Motives are produced and debated—the sudden turns of thought—the violent fluctuations of the passions—the gentle variations of the feelings, appear. Time is given for this internal display—and a species of poetry arises, distinguished for the fullness and the decision with which the springs of action in the human bosom are shown as breaking forth into, and determining, human action. Meanwhile, the means that are thus afforded to the poet of a more energetic representation, curb in him the flights of imagination. To represent Neptune as at three strides from his seat on a mountain-top descending the slope, that with all its woods quakes under the immortal feet, and as reaching at the fourth step his wave-covered palace—this, which was easy between the epic poet and his hearer, becomes out of place and impossible for tragedy, simply because no actors and no stage can represent a god so step-

ping and the hills so trembling. We know what the pathetically sublime literature was which the drama gave to Athens; how poets of profound and capacious spirits, who had looked into themselves—and, so enlightened, had observed human life—were able, by taking for their subjects the strongly portrayed characters and the stern situations of the old Greek fable, to unite in their lofty and impressive scenes the truth of nature and the tender interests which endear our familiar homes, to the grandeur of heroic recollections, to the awe of religion, and to the pomp, the magnificence, and the beauty of a gorgeous yet intellectual art.

The Greek Tragic drama is from end to end in verse; and unavoidably, because 'tis a part of a splendid religious celebration. It is involved in the solemn pomp of a festival. Therefore it dons its own solemn festival robes. The musical form is our key to the spirit. And in that varying musical form there are three degrees—first, the Iambic, nearest real speech—second, the Lyrical dialogue, farther off—third, the full Chorus—utmost removal. Pray, do not talk to us of the naturalness of the language. You never heard the like spoken in all your days. Natural it was on that stage—and over the roofless theatre the tutelary deities of Athens leant listening from the sky.

The model, or law, or self of the English drama, is *Shakspeare*. The character of his drama is, the imaging of nature. A foremost characteristic of nature is infinite and infinitely various production, expressing or intimating an indefatigably and inexhaustibly active spirit. But such a spirit of life, so acting and producing, appears to us as a fountain, ever freshly flowing from the very hand of God. All *that* Shakspeare's drama images; and thus his art appears to us, as always the highest art appears to us to be, a Divine thing. The musical forms of his language should answer; and they do. They are, first, prose; second, loose blank verse; third, tied blank verse; fourth, rhyme.* This unbounded variety of the musical form really seems to answer to the premised idea; seems ready to clothe infinite and infinitely varied intellectual production. Observe, we beseech you, what varieties of music! The rhyme—ay, the rhyme—has a dozen at least;—couplets—interlaced rhyme—single rhyme and double

* The prose even is, in its music, rude in ordinary folks—or *artful*, as in Hamlet's admiration of the world.

—anapests—diverse lyrical measures. Observe, too, that speakers of all orders and characters use all the forms. Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Coriolanus, Lance, use prose; Leontes and his little boy, Lear, Coriolanus, and his domestics—to say nothing of the Steward—Macbeth and his murderlings, use blank verse. Even Falstaff, now and then, a verse. All, high and low, wise, merry and sad, *rhyme*. Fools, witches, fairies—we know not who else—use lyrical measures. Upon the whole, the *uttermost*—that is, the musical form—answers herein to the *innermost* spirit. The spirit, endlessly-varying, creates endlessly-varying musical form. The total character is accordingly self-lawed, irrepressible creation.

Blank verse, then, is the predominating musical form of Shakspeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies. To such a degree as that *all* the other forms often slip from one's recollection; and, to speak strictly, blank verse must be called the rule, while all other forms are diverse exceptions.

Only one comedy, the homely and English "Merry Wives of Windsor," has, for its rule, prose. Even here the two true lovers hold their few short colloquies in blank verse. And when the concluding fairy masque is toward, blank verse rages. Page and Ford catch it. The merry wife, Mrs. Page, turns poetess to describe and project the superstitions to be used. In the fairy-scene Sir John himself, Shakspeare's most dogged observer of prose, is quelled by the spirit of the hour, and *RHYMES*. You would think that the soul of Shakspeare has been held chained through the play, and breaks loose for a moment ere ending it. All this being said, it may be asked:—"Why is blank verse the ordinary musical form of Shakspeare's dramas?" And the obvious answer appears to be:—"Because it has a *middle removedness* or *estrangement* from the ordinary speech of men:—raising the language into imagination, and yet not out of sympathy."

Shakspeare and Sophocles agree in truth and strength, in life, passion, and imagination. They differ inwardly herein—Shakspeare founds in the power of nature. Under his hand nature brings forth art. The Attic tragedy begins from art. Its first condition is order, since it is part of a religious ceremonial. It resorts to nature to quicken, strengthen, bear up art. Nature enters upon the Athenian stage, under a previous recognition of art as dominant.

From all that has been now said—and it is more than we at first intended to say—this conclusion follows, that there may be

English rhymed dramas. There are French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian ones—and fine ones too; and nothing in nature forbids that there may be infinitely finer. That which universally affects off the stage, in all kinds of poetry, would, in the work of a great master, affect on it. The delusion of the theatre overcomes far greater difficulties, carried with us thither in the constitution of our habitual life, than the use of rhyme by the visionary beings in the mimic scene. Beyond all doubt there might arise in rhyme a most beautiful romantic drama. Unreal infused into real, turns real at once into poetry. But this is of all degrees. In the lowest prose of life there is an infusion which we overlook. We should drop down dead without it. Let the unreal a little predominate; and now we become sensible to its presence, and now we *call* the compound poetry. Let it be an affair of words, and we require verse as the fitting form. Our stage and language have settled upon blank verse as the proper metrical form for the proper measure of the unreal upon the ordinary tragic stage. Rhymed verse has a more marked separation, or is more distant from prose than blank verse is. Hence, you might suppose that it will be fitted on the stage for a surcharge of the unreal. Dryden's heroic tragedies are a proof, as far as one authority goes; and even they had great power over audiences willing to be charmed, and accustomed to what we should think a wide and continued departure from nature. But imagine a romantic play, full of beautiful and tender imagination, exquisitely written in rhyme, and modeled to some suitable mould invented by a happy genius. Why, the "Gentle Shepherd," idealizing modern Scottish pastoral life, was, in its humble way, an achievement; and, within our memory, critics of the old school looked on it well pleased when acted by lads and lasses of high degree, delighting to deem themselves for an evening the simple dwellers in huts around Habbie's How.

Let us now collect together all that Dryden has, in different moods of his unsettled and unsteady mind, written about Shakspeare. In the dialogue formerly spoken of, comparisons are made between the modern English and the modern French Drama. "If you consider the plots," says Neander, "our own are fuller of variety; if the writing, ours are more quick and fuller of spirit." And he denies—like a bold man as he was—that the English have in aught imitated or borrowed from the French. He says our plots are weaved in English

looms ; we endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters, which are derived to us from Shakspeare and Fletcher ; the copiousness and well-knit-ting of the intrigues we have from Jonson. These two things he dares affirm of the English drama ; that with more variety of plot and character, it has equal regularity ; and that in most of the irregular plays of Shakspeare and Fletcher (for Ben Jonson's are for the most part regular), there are a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the writing, than there are in any of the French. For a pattern of a perfect play, he is proposing to examine "the Silent Woman" of Jonson, the most careful and learned observer of the dramatic laws, when he is requested by Eugenius to give in full Ben's character. He agrees to do so, but says it will first be necessary to speak somewhat of Shakspeare and Fletcher : "his rivals in poesy, and one of them, in my opinion, at least his equal, perhaps his superior." Malone observes, that the caution observed in this decision proves the miserable taste of the age ; and Sir Walter, that Jonson, "by dint of learning and arrogance, fairly bullied the age into receiving his own character of his merits, and that he was not the only persons of the name that has done so." This is coming it rather too strong ; yet to stand well with others there is nothing like having a good opinion of one's-self, and proclaiming it with the sound of a trumpet.

"To begin, then, with Shakspeare. He was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul ; all the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously but luckily ; when he describes anything, you more than see it—you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation : he was naturally learned ; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature ; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike ; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid ; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him—no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

'Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.'

"The consideration of this made Mr. Hales of Eton say,

that there was no subject of which any poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better done in Shakspeare; and, however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had coteremporaries with him, Fletcher and Jonson, never equaled them to him in their esteem; and in the last king's court, when Ben's reputation was at its highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakspeare far above him.

"Beaumont and Fletcher, of whom I am next to speak, had, with the advantage of Shakspeare's wit, which was their precedent, great natural gifts, improved by study. Beaumont, especially, being so accurate a judge of plays, that Ben Jonson while he lived submitted all his writings to his censure, and, 'tis thought, used his judgment in correcting, if not contriving, all his plots. What value he had for him appeared by the verses he writ to him, and therefore I need speak no further of it. The first play that brought Fletcher and him into esteem was their 'Philaster;' for before that they had written two or three very unsuccessfully, as the like is reported of Ben Jonson before he writ 'Every man in his Humour.' Their plots were generally more regular than Shakspeare's, especially those which were made before Beaumont's death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better, whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartee no poet before them could paint as they have done. Humour, which Ben Jonson derived from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but, above all, love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to the highest perfection—what words have since been taken in are rather superfluous than ornamental. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakspeare's or Jonson's; the reason is, because there is a certain gayety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours. Shakspeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs.

"As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge—of himself as well as others. One cannot say

he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it in his works ; you find little to retouch or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him ; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who succeeded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions ; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people. He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline.' But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch ; and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of those writers he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that, if one of their poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language it was that he weaved it too closely and laboriously, in his comedies especially. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our tongue, leaving the words, which he translated, almost as much Latin as he found them ; wherein, though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough follow with the idiom of ours. If I would compare him with Shakspeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakspeare the greater wit. Shakspeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets ; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing. I admire him, but I love Shakspeare. To conclude of him, as he has given us the most correct plays, so, in the precepts which he has laid down in his 'Discoveries,' we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us."

Samuel Jonson truly says of the Dialogue, "that it will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, and heightened with illustration." But we have some difficulty in going along with him when he adds—"The account of Shakspeare

may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastic criticism, exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so sublime in its comprehension and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakspeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased his epitome of excellence; of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value, though of greater bulk." Since this great critic's day—ay, with all his defects and perversities, Samuel was a great critic—what a blaze of illumination has been brought to bear on the genius of Shakspeare! Nevertheless, all honour to Glorious John! Next comes the famous prologue:—

"As when a tree's cut down, the secret root
Lives under ground, and thence new branches shoot;
So, from old Shakspeare's honour'd dust, this day
Springs up the buds, a new reviving play.
Shakspeare, who (taught by none) did first impart
To Fletcher wit, to labouring Jonson art;
He, monarch-like, gave those, his subjects, law,
And is that nature which they paint and draw;
Fletcher reach'd that which on his heights did grow,
While Jonson crept and gather'd all below.
This did his love, and this his mirth digest;
One imitates him most, the other best.
If they have since outwrit all other men,
'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakspeare's pen.
The storm which vanish'd on the neighbouring shore,
Was taught by Shakspeare's 'Tempest' first to roar.
That innocence and beauty which did smile
In Fletcher, grew on this enchanted isle.
But Shakspeare's magic could not copied be—
Within that circle none durst walk but he.
I must confess 'twas bold, nor would you now
That liberty to vulgar wits allow,
Which works by magic supernatural things:
But Shakspeare's power is sacred as a king's.
Those legends from old priesthood were received,
And he them writ as people them believed."

Strange that he who could write so nobly about Shakspeare, could commit such an outrage on his divine genius as the play to which this is the prologue—"The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island" a Comedy. It was—Dryden tells us,

and we must believe him—"originally Shakspeare's; a poet for whom Sir William D'Avenant had particularly a high veneration, and whom he first taught me to admire." So the two together, to show their joint and judicious admiration, set about altering "The Tempest." Fletcher had imitated it all in vain in his "Sea Voyage;" the storm, the desert Island, and the woman who had never seen a man, are all implicit testimonies of it." Few more delightful poets than Fletcher; but in an evil hour, and deserted by his good genius, did he then hoist his sail. But now cover your face with your hands—and then shut your ears. "*Sir John Suckling, a professed admirer of our author, has followed his footsteps in his 'Goblins;' his Regmella being an open imitation of Shakspeare's Miranda, and his spirits, though counterfeit, yet are copied from Ariel.*" But Sir William D'Avenant, "as he was a man of quick and piercing imagination, soon found that somewhat might be added to the design of Shakspeare, of which neither Fletcher nor Suckling had ever thought; "and this excellent contrivance," he was pleased, says Dryden with looks of liveliest gratitude, "to communicate to me, and to desire my assistance in it." You probably knew what was the "excellent contrivance" by which "the last hand"—the hand after Suckling's—"was put to it;" so that thenceforth the "Tempest" was to be let alone in its glory. "The counterpart to Shakspeare's plot, namely, that of a man who had never seen a woman, that by this means these two characters of innocence and love might the more illustrate and commend each other. *I confess that from the very first moment it so pleased me, that I never writ anything with more delight.*" Sir Walter says it seems to have been undertaken chiefly with a view to give room for scenial decoration, and that Dryden's share in the alteration was probably little more than the care of adapting it to the stage. But Dryden's own words contradict that supposition, and he further tells us that his writings received D'Avenant's daily amendments; "and that is the reason why it is not so faulty as the rest, which I have done without the help and correction of so judicious a friend." They wrote together at the same desk. And Dryden found D'Avenant of "so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him on which he would not suddenly produce a thought, extremely pleasant and surprising. * * His imagination was such as could not easily enter into any other man." It had been easy enough, he adds, to have arrogated more to

himself than was his due in the writing of the play; but "besides the worthlessness of the action, which deterred me from it, (there being nothing so base as to rob the dead of his reputation,) I am satisfied I could never have received so much honour in being thought the author of any poem, how excellent soever, as I shall from the joining of my imperfections with the merit and name of Shakspeare and Sir William D'Avenant." From all this, and more of the same sort, 'tis plain that Dryden's share in the composition was at least equal to—we should say, much greater than—D'Avenant's.

You must not meddle with Miranda—for she is all our own. Yet we cheerfully introduce you to her sister, Dorinda, and leave you all alone by yourselves for an hour's flirtation. Hush! she is describing the ship!

"This floating Ram did bear his horns above,
And tied with ribands, ruffling in the wind:
Sometimes he nodded down his head awhile,
And then the waves did heave him to the moon,
He climbing to the top of all the billows;
And then again he curtsied down so low
I could not see him. Till at last, all sidelong
With a great crack, his belly burst in pieces."

We had but once before handled this performance—some threescore and ten years ago, when a man of middle age. We dimly remember being amused in our astonishment. Now that we are beginning to get a little old, we are, perhaps, growing too fastidious; yet surely it is something very shocking. Portsmouth Poll and Plymouth Sall—sisters originating at Yarmouth—when brought into comparison with Miranda and Dorinda of the enchanted island, to our imagination seem idealized into Vestal virgins. True, they were famous—when not half seas over—for keeping a quiet tongue in their mouths; with them mum was the word. Only when drunk as blazes, poor things, did they, by word or gesture, offend modesty's most sacred laws. But D'Avenant's and Dryden's daughters are such leering and lascivious drabs, so dreadfully addicted to innuendoes and *doubles entendres* of the most alarming character, that, high as is our opinion of the intrepidity of British seamen, we should not fear to back the two at odds against a full-manned jolly-boat from a frigate in the offing sent in to fill her water casks. Caliban himself—and what a Caliban he has become!—fights shy of the plenireps. Why—if it must be so—we give our arm to his sister Sy-

corax, a "fearsome dear" no doubt, but what better could one expect in a misbegotten monster? Oh, the confounding mysteries of self-degrading genius!

In the preface to "An Evening's Love; or, the Mock Astrologer," we again meet with some criticism on Shakspeare. We learn from it that Dryden had formed the ambitious design of writing on the difference betwixt the plays of his own age and those of his predecessors on the English stage, in order to show in what parts of "dramatic poesy we were excelled by Ben Jonson—I mean, humour and contrivance of comedy; and *in what we may justly claim pre-
cedence of Shakspeare and Fletcher!* namely, in heroic plays." He had, moreover, proposed to treat "of the improvement of our language since Fletcher's and Jonson's days, and, consequently, of our refining the courtship, raillery, and conversation of plays." In great attempts 'tis glorious even to fail; and assuredly had Dryden essayed all this, his failure would have been complete. "I would," said he, with his usual ignorance of his own and his age's worst sins and defects, "have the characters well chosen, and kept distant from interfering with each other, which is more than Fletcher *or Shakspeare did!* * * I think there is no folly so great in any part of our age, as the superfluity and waste of wit was in some of our predecessors, particularly Fletcher *and Shakspeare.*" Refining the courtship, raillery, and conversation of plays! We cannot, perhaps, truly say very much in praise of those qualities in Ben's comedies, admirable as they are, and superior, in all respects, a thousand times over, to the best of Dryden's and of his cotemporaries'; but wilfully blind, indeed, or worse, must the man who could thus write have been to the matchless grace, vivacity, delicacy, prodigality, and poetry of Shakspeare's comedy, which as far transcends all the happiest creations of other men's wit, as the pervading pathos and sublimity of his tragedy all their happiest inspirations from the holy fountain of ennobling or pitying tears.

In its day the following Epilogue caused a great hubbub—

"They, who have best succeeded on the stage,
Have still conform'd their genius to their age.
Thus Jonson did mechanic humours show,
When men were dull and conversation low.
Then comedy was faultless, but 'twas coarse:
Cobb's tankard was a jest, and Otter's horse.

And, as their comedy, their love was mean;
 Except by chance, in some one labour'd scene,
 Which must atone for an ill-written play.
 They rose, but at their height could seldom stay;
 Fame then was cheap, and the first comer sped;
 And they have kept it since by being dead.
 But, were they now to write, when critics weigh
 Each line, and every word, throughout a play,
 None of them, no, not Jonson in his height,
 Could pass without allowing grains for weight.
 Think it not envy that these truths are told—
 Our poet's not malicious, though he's bold.
 'Tis not to brand them that their faults are shown,
 But by their errors, to excuse his own.
 If love and honour now are higher raised,
 'Tis not the poet, but the age is praised.
 Wit's now arrived to a more high degree;
 Our native language more refined and free;
 Our ladies and our men now speak more wit,
 In conversation, than those poets writ.
 Then, one of these is, consequently, true;
 That what this poet writes comes short of you,
 And imitates you ill, (which most he fears,)
 Or else his writing is not worse than theirs.
 Yet, though you judge (as sure the critics will)
 That some before him writ with greater skill,
 In this one praise he has their fame surpast,
 To please an age more gallant than the last."

Dryden was called over the coals for this sacrilegious Epilogue by persons ill qualified for censors—among others, by my Lord Rochester—and was instantly ready with his defence—an "Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age." In it he repeats the senseless assertion, "that the language, wit, and conversation of our age are improved and refined above the last;" and he takes care to include among the writers of the last age, *Shakspeare*, Fletcher, and Jonson. "In what," he asks, "does the refinement of a language principally consist?"

"Either in rejecting such old words or phrases which are ill sounding or improper, or in admitting new, which are more proper, more sounding, and more luxuriant. * * * Malice and partiality set apart, let any man who understands English, read diligently the works of *Shakspeare* and Fletcher, and I dare undertake that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense; yet these men are revered, when we are not forgiven. That their wit is great, and many times their expressions noble,

envy itself cannot deny. But the times were ignorant in which they lived. Poetry was then, if not in its infancy among us, at least not arrived to its vigour and maturity.— Witness the lameness of their plots, many of which, especially those they writ first (for even that age refined itself in some measure,) were made up of some ridiculous, incoherent story, which in one play many times took up the business of an age. I suppose I need not name ‘Pericles, the Prince of Tyre,’ nor the historical plays of Shakspeare, besides many of the rest, as the ‘Winter’s Tale,’ ‘Love’s Labour Lost,’ ‘Measure for Measure,’ which were either founded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment.”

In all this rash and wretched folly, Dryden shows his ignorance of the order in which Shakspeare wrote his plays; and Sir Walter kindly says, that there will be charity in believing that he was not intimately acquainted with those he so summarily and unjustly condemns. But unluckily this nonsense was written during the very time he was said by Sir Walter to have been “engaged in a closer and more critical examination of the ancient English poets than he had before bestowed upon them;” and, from the perusal of Shakspeare, learning that the sole staple of the drama was “human characters acting from the direct and energetic influence of human passions.” Yet Sir Walter was right; only Dryden’s opinions and judgments kept fluctuating all his life long, too much obedient to the gusts of whim and caprice, or oftener still to the irregular influences of an impatient spirit, that could not brook any opposition from any quarter to its domineering self-will. For in not many months after, in the Prologue to “Aurengzebe,” are these noble lines—

“But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his heart at Shakspeare’s sacred name;
Awed when he hears his godlike Romans rage,
He, in a just despair, would quit the stage,
And to an age less polish’d, more unskill’d,
Does, with disdain, the foremost honours yield.”

Less polished—more unskilled! Here, too, he is possessed with the same foolish fancy as when he said, in the “Defence of the Epilogue,”—“But these absurdities which those poets committed, may more properly be called the age’s fault than theirs. For besides the want of education and learning, (which

was their particular unhappiness,) they wanted the benefit of converse. Their audiences were no better, and therefore were satisfied with what they brought. Those who call theirs the golden age of poetry, have only this reason for it, that they were then content with acorns before they knew the use of bread!" Then, after a somewhat hasty and unconvincing examination of certain incorrectnesses and meannesses of expression even in Ben Jonson, learned as he was, he asks, "What correctness after this can be expected from *Shakspeare* or Fletcher, who wanted that learning and care which Jonson had? I will therefore spare myself the trouble of inquiring into their faults, who, had they lived now, had doubtless written more correctly." Since *Shakspeare's* days, too, the English language had been refined, he says, by receiving new words and phrases, and becoming the richer for them, as it would be "by importation of bullion." It is admitted, however, that *Shakspeare*, Fletcher and Jonson, did indeed beautify our tongue by their *curiosa felicitas* in the use of old words, to which it often gave a rare meaning; but in that they were followed by "Sir John Suckling and Mr. Waller, *who refined upon them!*" But the greatest improvement and refinement of all, "in this age," is said to have been in wit. Pure wit, and without alloy, was the wit of the Court of Charles the Second, and of the Clubs. It shines like gold, yea, much fine gold, in the works of all the master play-wrights. Whereas, "*Shakspeare*, who many times has written better than any poet in any language, is yet so far from writing wit always, or expressing that wit according to the dignity of the subject, that he writes, in many places, below the dullest writers of ours, or any preceding age. Never did any author precipitate himself from such height of thought to so low expressions, as he often does. He is the very Janus of poets; he wears almost everywhere two faces; and you have scarce begun to admire the one ere you despise the other." That the wit "of this age" is much more courtly, may, Dryden thinks, be easily proved by viewing the characters of gentlemen which were written in the last. For example—who do you think? Why, *Mercutio*. "*Shakspeare* showed the best of his skill in *Mercutio*; and he said himself that he was forced to kill him in the third act, to prevent being killed by him. But for my part I cannot find he was so dangerous a person: I see nothing in him but what was so exceedingly harmless, that he might have lived to the end of the play and

died in his bed, without offence to any man." Wit, Shakespeare had in common with his ingenious cotemporaries; but theirs, to speak out plainly, "was not that of gentlemen; there was ever somewhat that was ill-natured and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors." "In this age," Dryden declares that the last and greatest advantage of writing proceeds from conversation. "In that age" there was "less gallantry;" and "neither did they (Shakespeare, Ben, and the rest) keep the best company of theirs." But let the illustrious time-server speak at large.

"Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined, I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court; and in it, particularly to the king, whose example gives a law to it. His own misfortunes, and the nation's, afforded him an opportunity, which is rarely allowed to sovereign princes—I mean of traveling, and being conversant in the most polished courts of Europe; and, thereby, of cultivating a spirit which was formed by nature to receive the impressions of a gallant and generous education. At his return, he found a nation lost as much in barbarism as in rebellion; and, as the excellency of his nature forgave the one, so the excellency of his manners reformed the other. The desire of imitating so great a pattern, first awakened the dull and heavy spirits of the English from their natural reservedness; loosened them from their stiff forms of conversation, and made them easy and pliant to each other in discourse. Thus, insensibly, our way of living became more free; and the fire of the English wit, which was before stifled under a constrained, melancholy way of breeding, began first to display its force by mixing the solidity of our nation with the air and gayety of our neighbours. This being granted to be true, it would be a wonder if the poets, whose work is imitation, should be the only persons in three kingdoms who should not receive advantage by it; or, if they should not more easily imitate the wit and conversation of the present age than of the past.

"Let us, therefore, admire the beauties and the heights of Shakespeare, without falling after him into a carelessness, and, as I may call it, a lethargy of thought for whole scenes together."

Shakespeare lethargic—comatose!

Sir Walter's admiration of "glorious John" was so much part of his very nature, that he says, "it is a bold, perhaps presumptuous, task to attempt to separate the true from the

false criticism in the foregoing essay ; for who is qualified to be umpire betwixt Shakspeare and Dryden?" None that ever breathed, better than his own great and good self. Yet surely he was wrong in saying, that when Shakspeare wrote for the stage, "wit was not required." Required or not, there it was in perfection, of which Dryden, with all his endowments, had no idea. The question is not as he puts it, were these "audiences incapable of receiving the delights which a cultivated mind derives from the gradual development of a story, the just dependence of its parts upon each other, the minute beauties of language, and the absence of everything incongruous or indecorous?" They may have been so, though we do not believe they were. But the question is, are Shakspeare's Plays, beyond all that ever were written, distinguished for those very excellences, and free from almost all those very defects? That they are, few if any will now dare to deny. While the best of Dryden's own plays, and still more those of his forgotten cotemporaries, infinitely inferior to Shakspeare's in all those very excellences, are choke-full of all manner of faults and flagrant sins against decorum and congruity, in the eyes of mere taste; and, with a few exceptions, according to no rules can be rated high as works of art. The truth of all this manifestly forced itself upon Sir Walter's seldom erring judgment, as he proceeded in the composition of the elaborate note, in which he would fain have justified Dryden even at the expense of Shakspeare. And, as it now stands, though beautifully written, it swarms with *non-sequiturs*, and perplexing half-truths.

In the Preface to "*Troilus and Cressida*," (1679,) Dryden again—and for the last time—descants, in the same unsatisfactory strains, on Shakspeare. *Æschylus*, he tells us, was held in the same veneration by the Athenians of after ages as Shakspeare by his countrymen. But in the age of that poet, the Greek tongue had arrived at its full perfection, and they had among them an exact standard of writing and speaking; whereas the English language, even in his (Dryden's) own age, was wanting in the very foundation of certainty, "a perfect grammar:" so, what must it have been in Shakspeare's time?

"The tongue in general is so much refined since then, that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are *ungrammatical*, others coarse: and his whole style is so pes-

tered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure. It is true that, in his latter plays, he had worn off somewhat of the rust: but the tragedy which I have undertaken to correct was in all probability one of his first endeavours on the stage. . . . So lamely is it left to us, that it is not divided into acts. For the play itself, the author seems to have begun it with some fire. The characters of Pandarus and Thersites are promising enough: but, as if he grew weary of his task, after an entrance or two, he lets them fall: and the latter part of the tragedy is nothing but a confusion of drums and trumpets, excursions and alarms. The persons who give name to the tragedy are left alive. *Cressida* is false, and is not punished. Yet, after all, because the play was *Shakspeare's*, and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried. Accordingly, I have remodeled the plot, threw out many unnecessary persons, improved those which were begun and left unfinished, as *Hector*, *Troilus*, *Pandarus*, and *Thersites*, and added that of *Andromache*. After that, I made, with no small trouble, an order and connection of all the scenes, removing them from the places where they were inartificially set; and though it was impossible to keep them all unbroken, because the scene must be sometimes in the city and sometimes in the court, yet I have so ordered them that there is a coherence of them with one another, and a dependence on the main design; no leaping from *Troy* to the *Grecian* tents, and thence back again, in the same act, but a due proportion of time allowed for every motion. I need not say that I have refined the language, which before was obsolete; but I am willing to acknowledge that as I have often drawn his English nearer to our times, so I have sometimes conformed my own to his; and consequently, the language is not altogether so pure as it is significant."

John Dryden and *Samuel Jonson* resemble one another very strongly in their treatment of *Shakspeare*. Both of them seem at times to have perfectly understood and felt his greatness, and both of them have indited glorious things in its exaltation. Their praise is the utterance of worship. You might believe them on their knees before an idol. But theirs is a strange kind of reverence. It alternates with derision, and is compatible with contempt. The god sinks into the man, and the man is a barbarian, babbling uncouth speech.

"Coarse," "ungrammatical," "obscure," "affected," "intelligible," "rusty!" The words distilled from the lips of Cordelia, Desdemona, Juliet, Imogen!

Dryden informs us, that ages after the death of Æschylus, the Athenians ordained an equal reward to the poets who could alter his plays to be acted in the theatre, with those whose productions were wholly new, and of their own. But the case, he laments, is not the same in England, though the difficulties are greater. Æschylus wrote good Greek, Shakspeare bad English; and to make it intelligible to a refined audience was a hard job. Soberly "pestered with figurative expressions" must have been the transmogrifier; and he had to look for wages, not to a nation's gratitude, but a manager's greed. It was, indeed, a desperate expedient for raising the funds. In his judgment the Play itself was but a poor affair—an attempt by an apprentice, that, to be producible, required the shaping of a master's hand. "Lamely left," it had to be set on its feet ere it could tread the stage. With what *nonchalance* does he throw out "unnecessary persons," and improve "unfinished!" Hector, Troilus, Pandarus, and Thersites, skillless Shakspeare had but begun—artful Dryden made an end of them; Cressida, who was false as she was fair, yet left alive to deceive more men, became a paragon of truth, chastity, and suicide; and, by an amazing stretch of invention, far beyond the Swan's, was added Andromache. Dryden proudly announces that "the scenes of Pandarus and Cressida, of Troilus and Pandarus, of Andromache with Hector and the Trojans, in the second act, are wholly new; together with that of Nestor and Ulysses with Thersites, and that of Thersites with Ajax and Achilles. I will not weary my reader with the scenes which are added of Pandarus and the lovers in the third, and those of Thersites, which are wholly altered; but I cannot omit the last scene in it, which is almost half the act, betwixt Troilus and Hector. I have been so tedious in three acts, that I shall contract myself in the two last. The beginning scenes of the fourth act are either added, or changed wholly by me; the middle of it is Shakspeare's, altered and mingled with my own; three or four of the last scenes are altogether new; and the whole fifth act, both the plot and the writing, are my own editions." O heavens! why was it not all "my own?"

No human being can have a right to use another in such a way as this. Shakspeare's plays were then, and are now,

as much his own property as the property of the public—or rather, the public holds them in trust. Dryden was a delinquent towards the dead. His crime was sacrilege. In reading his “Troilus and Cressida,” you ever and anon fear you have lost your senses. Bits of veritable Shakspearean gold, burnished star-bright, embossed in pewter! Diamonds set in dirt! Sentences illuminated with words of power, suddenly rising and sinking, through a flare of fustian! Here Apollo’s lute—there hurdy-gurdy.

“For the play itself,” says Dryden insolently, “the author seems to have begun it with some fire;” and here it is continued with much smoke. “The characters of Pandarus and Thersites are promising enough;” here we shudder at their performance. Such a monstrous Pandarus would have been blackballed at the Pimp. Thersites—Shakspeare’s Thersites—for Homer’s was another Thersites quite—finely called by Coleridge “the Caliban of demagogic life”—loses all individuality, and is but a brutal buffoon grossly caricatured. The scene between Ulysses and Achilles, with its wondrous wisdomful speech, is omitted! of itself worth all the poetry written between the Restoration and the Revolution.

Spirit of glorious John! forgive, we beseech thee, truth-telling Christopher—but angels and ministers of grace defend us! WHO ART THOU? Shakspeare’s ghost.

PROLOGUE, SPOKEN BY MR. BETTERTON, REPRESENTING THE GHOST
OF SHAKSPEARE.

“See, my loved Britons, see your Shakspeare rise,
An awful ghost confess’d to human eyes!
Unnam’d, methinks, distinguish’d I had been
From other shades, by this eternal green,
About whose wreaths the vulgar poets strive,
And, with a touch, their wither’d bays revive.
Untaught, unpractis’d, in a barbarous age,
I found not, but created first the stage;
And if I drain’d no Greek or Latin store,
’Twas that my own abundance gave me more.
On foreign trade I needed not rely,
Like fruitful Britain, rich without supply.
In this my rough-drawn play you shall behold
Some master-strokes, so manly and so bold,
That he who meant to alter, found ’em such,
He shook, and thought it sacrilege to touch.

Now, where are the successors to my name?
 What bring they to fill out a poet's fame?
 Weak, short-lived issues of a feeble age;
 Scarce living to be christened on the stage!
 For humour farce, for love they rhyme dispense,
 That tolls the knell for their departed sense.
 Dullness, that in a playhouse meets disgrace,
 Might meet with reverence in its proper place.
 The fulsome clench that nauseates the town,
 Would from a judge or alderman go down—
 Such virtue is there in a robe and gown!
 And that insipid stuff which here you hate,
 Might somewhere else be call'd a grave debate:
 Dullness is decent in the church and state.
 But I forget that still 'tis understood
 Bad plays are best decry'd by showing good.
 Sit silent, then, that my pleased soul may see
 A judging audience once, and worthy me.
 My faithful scene from true records shall tell,
 How Trojan valour did the Greek excel;
 Your great forefathers shall their fame regain,
 And Homer's angry ghost repine in vain."

The best hand of any man that ever lived, at prologue and epilogue was Dryden. And here he showed himself to be the boldest too; and above fear of ghosts. For though it was a make-believe, it must have required courage in Shakspeare's murderer to look on its mealy face. The ghost speaks well—nobly—for six lines—though more like Dryden's than Shakspeare's. *That* was not his style when alive. The seventh line would have choked him, had he been a mere light and shadow ghost. But in death never would he thus have given the lie to his life. "Untaught," he might truly have said—for he had no master. "Unpractised!" Nay, "Troilus and Cressida" sprang from a brain that had teemed with many a birth. "A barbarous age!" Read—"Great Eliza's golden time," when the sun of England's genius was at meridian. "Sacrilege to touch!" Prologue had not read Preface. Little did the "injured ghost" suspect the spectacle that was to ensue. Much of what follows is, in worse degree, Drydenish all over. Sweetest Shakspeare scoffed not so!

Suppose Shakspeare's ghost to have slipped quietly into the manager's box to witness the performance. Poets after death do not lose all memory of their own earthly visions. Thoughts of the fairest are with them in Paradise. At first sight of Dorinda he would have bolted.

Dryden says, that "he knew not to distinguish the blown puffy style from true sublimity." He would then have done so, and no mistake. "The fury of his fancy often transported him beyond the bounds of judgment, either in coining of new words and phrases, or racking words which were in use, into the violence of catachresis. His ears would have been jarred by Prospero's "polite conversation," so unlike what he, who had not "kept the best society," was confined to "in a barbarous age." Yet Dryden confessed that he "understood the nature of the passions," and "made his characters distinct;" so that "his failings were not so much in the passions themselves, as in his manner of expression." Unfortunately his vocabulary was neither choice nor extensive, and he "often obscured his meaning by his words, and sometimes made it unintelligible."

"To speak justly of this whole matter: it is neither height of thought that is discommended, nor pathetic vehemence, nor any nobleness of expression in its proper place; but it is a false measure of all these, something which is like them, and is not them; it is the Bristol stone, which appears like a diamond; it is an extravagant thought instead of a sublime one; it is a roaring madness instead of vehemence; a sound of words instead of sense. If Shakspeare were stripped of all the bombasts in his passions, and dressed in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining: if his embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot; but I fear (at least let me fear it for myself) that we, who ape his sounding words, have nothing of his thought, but are all outside; there is not so much as a dwarf within our giant's clothes. Therefore, let not Shakspeare suffer for our sakes; it is our fault, who succeed him in an age that is more refined, if we imitate him so ill that we copy his failings only, and make a virtue of that in our writings which in his was an imperfection.

"For what remains, the excellency of that poet was, as I have said, in the more manly passions; Fletcher's in the softer. Shakspeare writ better betwixt man and man; Fletcher betwixt man and woman; consequently the one described friendship better—the other love. Yet Shakspeare taught Fletcher to write love; and Juliet and Desdemona are originals. It is true, the scholar had the softer soul, but the master had the kinder. Friendship is both a virtue and a passion essentially; love is a passion only in its nature, and

is not a virtue but by accident ; good nature makes friendship, but effeminacy love. 'Shakspeare had an universal mind, which comprehended all characters and passions ; Fletcher, a more confined and limited ; for though he treated love in perfection, yet honour, ambition, revenge, and generally all the stronger passions, he either touched not, or not masterly. To conclude all, he was a limb of Shakspeare."

DRYDEN AND POPE.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

SPECIMENS of the British Critics are unavoidably an irregular history of Criticism in this island ; and such a history of our Criticism is unavoidably one, too, of our Poetry. The first name in our series is DRYDEN. See what we have written, and you find half our paper is on Shakspeare. POPE is our next worthy ; and of three or four pillars on which his name as a critic rests, one is his character of the Protagonist. Thus, for this earlier part of a new Age, the Presidents of Criticism are the two Kings of Verse.

When the poet is a critic, how shall we sever in him the two arts ? If his prose is explicit, his verse is implicit criticism ; and there was thus a reason for speaking somewhat especially of Dryden's character as a tragedian in drawing his character as a critic. But indeed the man, the critic, and the poet are one, and must be characterized as a whole ; only you may choose which aspect shall be principal. In studying his works you are struck, throughout, with a mind loosely disciplined in its great intellectual powers. In his critical writings, principles hastily proposed from partial consideration, are set up and forgotten. He intends largely, but a thousand causes restrain and lame the execution. Milton, in unsettled times, maintained his inward tranquillity of soul—and "dwelt apart." Dryden, in times oscillating indeed and various, yet quieter and safer, discloses private disturbance. His own bark appears to be borne on continually on a restless, violent, whirling and tossing stream. It never sleeps in brightness on its own calm and bright shadow. An unhappy biography weaves itself into the history of the inly dwelling Genius.

His treatment of "The Tempest" shows that he wanted intelligence of highest passions and imagination. One powerful mind must have discernment of another ; and he speaks best of Shakspeare when most generally. Then we might

believe that he understood him in all the greatness of his might; but our belief cannot support itself among the many outrages offered by him to nature, in a blind or wanton desecration of her holiest revealments to her inspired priest. In the sense stated above, his transformation of "The Tempest," is an implicit criticism of "The Tempest." And, assuredly, there is no great rashness of theorizing in him who finds in this barbarous murder, evidence to a lack of apprehension in Dryden, for some part of the beauty which he swept away. It would be unjustifiable towards the man to believe that, for the lowest legitimate end of a playwright—money—or for the lower, because illegitimate end, the popular breath of a day amongst a public of a day—he voluntarily ruined one of the most delicate amongst the beautiful creations with which the divine muse, his own patroness, had enlarged and adorned the bright world of mind—ruined it down to the depraved, the degraded, the debased, the groveling, the vulgar taste of a corrupt court and town. "The Inchaned Island" is a dolorous document ungainsayable, to the appreciation, in particulars, by that Dryden who could, in generals, laud Shakspeare so well—of that Shakspeare. And, if by Dryden, then by the age which he eminently led and for which he created, and for which he—destroyed.

"The Inchaned Island," and "The State of Innocence," come under no criticism. They are literally *FACINORA*. No rational account—no theory of them can be given. There they are—melancholy, but instructive facts. They express the revolution of the national spirit, on the upper degrees of the social scale. That which thirty, twenty, ten years before was impossible, happens. The hewing in pieces of Shakspeare, to throw him into the magical cauldron, to reproduce him, not in youth but in dotage, shows a death, but not yet the consequent life. Stupendous and sweet Nature whom we possessed, has vanished—fled heavenward—resolved into a dew—gone, into the country. At least, she is no longer in town! It may safely be averred, that no straining of the human intellect can compute the interval overleaped betwixt those originals, and these transcriptions. It is no translation, paraphrase, metaphrase. It is as if we should catch a confused and misapprehending glimpse of something that is going on in Jupiter. It is a transference from one order of beings to another: who have some intellectual processes in common, but are allied by no sympathy. The sublime is gone!

The beautiful is gone! The rational is gone! The loving is gone! The divine is not here! Nor the angelical! Nor the human! Alas! not even the diabolical! All is corrupted! banished! obliterated!

We have seen Dryden complaining of Shakspeare's language and style—of the language as antiquated from the understanding of an audience in his own day—of the whole style as being “so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.” And we were aware of the modest self-attribution, “*I have refined the language,*” in Drydenising Troilus and Cressida, “which before was *obsolete.*” And Samuel Jonson corroborates and enlarges the self-praise. “Dryden was the first who *refined the language of poetry.*”

At this day, such expressions fill the younger votary—creative or critical—of our vernacular muse with astonishment and perplexity, and set an older one upon thinking. Such assertions, it must be said, are “*unintelligible*” now, because a nobler unfolding of time, a happy return of our educated mind to the old and to the natural, has “*antiquated*” the literary sentiment, which Dryden and Jonson shared, and which they so confidently proposed to fitly-prepared readers.

Shakspeare obsolete! There is not a writer of to-day—whose words are *nearer to our hearts.* OUR OWN are *hardly as intimate there, as HIS are—*

“You are my true and honourable wife
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.”

says the troubled Brutus to Portia, who has expressed a mis-doubting of his true and clear affection for her.

Is this “*antiquated*” English, and thence “*unintelligible?*”

“*Viola.*—My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, WERE I A WOMAN,
I should your lordship.

Duke.—And what's her history?

Viola.—A blank my lord. She never told her love.

• • • • •

Duke.—But died thy sister of her love, my boy?

Viola.—I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers, too.”

“*Miranda.*—I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.

Ferdinand.—Where should this music be?
I' th' air?—or th' earth?
It sounds no more; and sure it waits upon

Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,
Weeping again the king my father's wreck,
This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air. Thence have I follow'd it,
Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.—
No! it begins again.

* * * * *

The ditty does remember my drown'd father.
This is no mortal business, nor no sound
That the earth owes.—I hear it now above me."

Here we have an "*antiquated*" touch or two that would have distressed Dryden. "*Passion*" is used in the old strong general sense of powerful, possessing emotion—in this example, filial sorrow; and lower down, we have the obsolete "*owes*" for the modern "*owns*," which two vitiating reliques of antiquity, along with that "*pestering*," "*affected*," and "*obscure*" figure, "*crept by me upon the waters*," would explain, without doubt, the impossibility which the reader feels himself under, of deriving any pleasure from the passage, and, to speak strictly, of discovering any signification in it!!

Assuredly we do not design transcribing whole Shakspeare, in order to contradicting a rash word of Dryden's. It might not be politic, either; for we should now and then meet with hard sentences, which might seem, like unlucky witnesses, to give evidence against the party that brings them before the tribunal. They would not. It is not in twenty places, or not in a hundred, that the obsolescence of a word or phrase makes Shakspeare hard, nor anything in the world but his wit, his intellect in excess, that occasionally runs away with him, and wraps up his meaning in a phraseology of his own creating; enigmas that are embarrassing to disinvolve again—which might, indeed, be an antiquated manner of his age, but not an obsolete dictionary and grammar. Neither is it required of us to convince the reader, by copious extracts, that *he* really understands Shakspeare, one or other of whose volumes he has always in his pocket, and whose English he sits hearing by the hour, lisped, mouthed, and legitimately spoken upon the stage, and still fancying that he understands what he hears. But it seems not altogether out of place, when the criticism of style is removed, and Shakspeare's English challenged, to recall into the liveliest consciousness of the reader, for a moment, the principal feature of the case, which is, without doubt, that Shakspeare is, in all our litera-

ture, the writer in whom this highest art of writing—namely—start not, good, innocent reader! for it must one day be said—*THE ART OF SIMPLICITY*—reaches its height; that magical art of steeping the words and idioms that fall from every lip at every minute, in music, and beauty, and pathos, and power, so that the familiar sound slips along the well-known inlets into the soul, and we are—"took ere we are 'ware."

Otherwise, for the general fact, that he, the reader of 1845, does understand, without much difficulty, the dramatic poet whom, in 1665, the gulf of years and the mutations of speech from father to son had rendered "unintelligible"—for the general verity of this unforeseen and improbable, but indisputable fact, the reader's recollection of his own personal history since he was eight or ten years old, may be left satisfactorily to vouch.

Neither was it, perhaps, unreasonable to snatch the occasion of alleging and manifesting the momentous and instructive truth—that *the intenser working of the mind finds out, in every age, the perpetuities of a language.*

Let us take our place for a moment in the Age of our poetry, which began with Dryden inclusive, and ended, or began ending, with Cowper exclusive. It was the *UNCREATIVE* age of our poetry; or, if you insist upon a denomination positively grounded, the *IMITATIVE*; or it was the *unimpassioned*, or it was the *rational*. Only the stage—losing passion, and not being the place for reason—went mad; as with Nat Lee. However, it retained something like a creative energy in Otway—and, moreover, Cato was really and afflictively a *rational* play.—The mere musical flow of the verse took the place of ever varying expression; and the name used as nearly equivalent with a good verse, at least for describing that which a verse should ordinarily be, is a *smooth* verse. Concurrent in time and cause was the invasion of the ten syllabled rhymed couplet, which, in place of the old diversified measures, took possession—off the stage—of our poetry. With all this went a transformation of the language accepted in verse; a severing and setting apart, as if a consecrating of the Parnassian dialect, which formerly was always caught up fresh from the lap of nature, at the risk, no doubt, of pulling weeds amongst the flowers.

In the incidental enunciations of criticism, we may easily gather notices of the movement this way, in the double mat-

ter of the language and the verse. In both, it receives, as it should do, the same name and description. It is the disengaging of REFINEMENT—its birth from the bosom of BARBARISM—distinct as mother and daughter. Shakspeare and Milton are the two great barbarous kings with a numerous court. If we try to give ourselves account of this Refinement and to vindicate for it the title, we are at a loss for names and notions. A Refinement which places the sluts of Dryden and his coterporaries above Imogen and Miranda, and above Eve. One hangs down the head in shame and perplexity. The history of England affords us a key in the name of Charles II. The Court, the Town, and Life-in-doors, are the words that resolve the mystery. The Muses that were Powers of Fell, and Flood, and Forest, and Field, that went with man wherever he went—in cottage and palace, in divan and in dungeon, in the student's or the miser's chamber, on the battle-plain, and at the dance of bacchanals—and when and wheresoever man spoke, heard their own mother-tongue, they were beguiled and imprisoned within the pale of artificial society and of high life. They had to learn the breeding of the drawing-room. Their auditors, in short, were gentlemen and ladies, who never forgot that they were such in the sudden overpowering consciousness of their being men and women.

There was, therefore, not only a denaturation, but an enervation of our poetry. There grew a dainty, fastidious, easily-loathing taste, betokening that the robust health of the older day—its healthy hunger, and its blood glowing and bounding like a forester's—was gone by. Never to come again? No! not so bad as that. We mark main lines. We have not room for the filling up. The last century closing, opened another Age, and we of to-day renovate and reinvigorate ourselves the best we may.

England surely did not bring up the Heroic Tragedy from its unsown soil. It was foreign falsehood that overcame English truth and sincerity. A factitious excitement that induced a false pitch throughout. On the old French stage, there were these two eminent characteristics of tragedy. Whatever the subject—if *Cedipus*, and the Plague raging—there must be a love-tale; and the most impassioned persons most continually dissert. Generally, Dryden's heroic plays have these two marks—both disnaturings of tragedy. We conceive in Dryden's age, and in himself as participant, a pam-

pered taste that cannot relish the wholesome simple meats which Nature, "good cateress," provides for her beloved, healthy, naturally-living children. That is to say, a vitiation of taste by indulged excesses; the wine and high feasting of their own theatre—which really made them unapt for understanding Shakspeare. For in such things men understand by force of delight, and if delight deserts them intelligence does too. The writings of the great creative poets—of Homer, Dante, Chaucer, and the rest—always give you the impression, that they possessed nature by observation and sympathy—outward nature and man's nature—that this, as it were, stood in their soul—the great perpetually-present original—from which they drew fancifully varied portraiture. It is there as their standard of reference when they read other poets. In Dryden it is not so. You know neither what he draws from, nor to what he refers in those extraordinary heroic tragedies which resemble nothing—no men and no women that were, are, or shall be. The impossible hero, the impossible heroine, and their extravagant sentiments, afford scope for a strife and a torture of thought, which is an inseparable medley of wit and argumentation; wit, reasoning, and logic jesting; a strange confusion of mental actions, with an unfavourable result; for this result is neither TRUTH nor MIRTH; but very CHIMERA—changing colour like the chameleon—shape like the clouds, and substance like the contents of an alchemist's crucible. Wit that to nonsense nearly is allied, if the thin partitions are not often actually broken down. Where you should have the living blood that flows through the living heart—the affections, the passions, and the actions that mould man and his world—you find sporting and rejoicing in their own elastic vigour, their adroitness and buoyancy, and in their wonderful starts and capricious bounds, aimless flights and aerial gambols—the bold, the keen, the nimble, the strenuous faculties, summoned together to compose the masculine, ranging, intrepid, various, piercing, and comprehensive INTELLECT—long the acknowledged sovereign-master of that high literature, which Milton had now left, and which Pope did not yet occupy.

Dryden dealt in the same incomprehensible way with Milton as with Shakspeare. In that famous falsifying epigram, the poet of *Paradise Lost* is greater than Homer and Virgil rolled into one; and his name is frequently mentioned with seeming reverence in those off-hand Prefaces. Yet

even in such critical passages there is no just approbation of his genius. Thus, in the preface to "The State of Innocence," he says—"The original being undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced." *This age! One of the greatest, &c.!* The age of Charles II! And what has become of the *other* great, noble, and sublime poems which that age has produced? These wavering words were written the year Milton died; and Dennis, or some one else, tells us that, twenty years after, Dryden confessed that he had not then been sensible of half the extent of his excellence. But what, twenty years after, does he say?—

"As for Mr. Milton, whom we all admire with so much justice, his subject is not that of a heroic poem, properly so called. His design is the losing of our happiness; his event is not prosperous like that of all other epic works; his heavenly machines are many, and human persons are but two. But I will not take Mr. Rhymer's work out of his hands; he has promised the world a critique on that author, wherein, though he will not allow his poem for heroic, I hope he will grant us that his thoughts are elevated, his words sounding, and that no man has so happily copied the manner of Homer, or so copiously translated his Grecisms, and the Latin elegancies of Virgil. It is true he runs into a flat of thoughts, sometimes for a hundred lines together, but it is when he has got into a track of Scripture. His antiquated words were his choice, not his necessity; for therein he imitated Spenser, as Spenser did Chaucer. And though, perhaps, the love of their master may have transported both too far in the frequent use of them, yet, in my opinion, obsolete words may there be laudably revived, when either they are more sounding or more significant than those in practice; and when their obscurity is taken away, by joining other words to them which clear the sense, according to the rule of Horace, for the admission of new words. But, in both cases, a moderation is to be observed in the use of them; for unnecessary coinage, as well as unnecessary revival, runs into affectation: a fault to be avoided on either hand. Neither will I justify Milton for his blank verse, though I may excuse him, by the example of Hannibal Caro, and other Italians, who have used it; for whatever causes he alleges for the abolishing of rhyme (which I have not now the leisure to examine), his own particular reason is plainly this, that rhyme was not his talent; he had neither the ease

of doing it, nor the graces of it; which is manifest in his 'Juvenilia,' or verses written in his youth, where his rhyme is always constrained and forced, and comes hardly from him, at an age when the soul is most pliant, and the passion of love makes almost every man a rhymier though not a poet."

The general effect of this captious passage is far from pleasant. It leaves us in doubt of the sincerity of Courts, and Towns, and Dryden's admiration of Mr. Milton. "His subject is not that of a heroic poem, properly so called." Milton did not call it a heroic poem. But it is an epic poem, and a divine. "The event is not prosperous." Assuredly not. For that matter, neither, to our minds, is that of the Iliad. It seems not a little unreasonable to complain that in *Paradise Lost*, the "human persons are but two." Dryden "will not take Mr. Rhymier's work out of his hands, who has promised us a critique on that author;" and he hopes Mr. Rhymier *will* grant so and so—look pray again at what Dryden hopes Mr. Rhymier will grant to Mr. Milton. Mr. Rhymier had promised to favour the public "with some reflections on that *Paradise Lost* of Milton, which some are pleased to call a poem." But this promise, says best Sir Walter, "he never filled up the measure of his presumption by attempting to fulfil." Milton running on a flat of thought for a hundred lines together on a track of Scripture! In his poem, by unnecessary coinage of new, and unnecessary revival of old words, running into *affectation*! Milton not to be *justified* for his blank verse, no, not even by the example of the illustrious and immortal Hannibal Caro! Then he took to it in despair, for rhyme was not his talent! His rhyme forced and constrained in the Hymn on the Nativity—in Lycidas—in *L'Allegro*—in *Il Penseroso*!

In the same Essay on Satire—Dryden talks, not very intelligibly, about "the beautiful turns of words and thoughts; which are as requisite in this as in heroic poetry itself;" but with which he confesses himself to have been unacquainted till about twenty years before, when "that noble wit of Scotland," Sir George Mackenzie, asked him why he did not imitate "the turns of Mr. Waller and Sir John Denham, of which he repeated many to me." The memory of that "noble wit of Scotland" is far from being honoured—nay, it is execrated by his countrymen—by the common people we mean—and, in the long run, they are no bad judges of merit. He was, we believe, no great shakes as a lawyer, either within or without the bar; and, like many other well-born, weak-

mind men, had a taste for elegant literature and vulgar blood. Of his "voluminous works, historical and juridical," we know less than nothing; but his "Essays on several moral subjects," have more than once fallen out of our hands. Sir Walter says, "he was an accomplished scholar, of lively talents, and ready elocution, and very well deserved the appellation of a noble wit of Scotland." "The Bluidy Mac-kenzie," reciting to Dryden many "beautiful turns" from Waller and Denham—and Dryden calling the poetasters "those two fathers of our English poetry," in the same page where he is writing of Milton! At Sir George's behest, in Cowley, even in his "Davideis," an heroic poem, he sought in vain for "elegant turns, either on the word or on the thought;" and his search was equally fruitless in the "Paradise Lost"—for, as Milton "endeavours everywhere to express Homer, whose age had not yet arrived to that fineness, I found in him a true sublimity, lofty thoughts, which were clothed with admirable Grecisms, and ancient words which he had been digging from the mines of Chaucer and Spenser; and which, with all their rusticity, had somewhat of venerable in them. But I found not there, neither, that for which I looked." His search through Spenser and Tasso is more fortunate; Virgil and Ovid are the two principal fountains of them in Latin poetry; and "the French, at this day, are so fond of them, that they judge them to be first beauties; *delicate et bien tourné*, are the highest commendations which they bestow on somewhat which they think a masterpiece."

This sort of explicit criticism, in a small way, is rather unsatisfactory; so let us look at a specimen of implicit on Milton. In Todd's edition are detailed the names of the translators of "Paradise Lost" into rhyme and prose. "We must not," says Sir Walter, "confound with these effusions of gratuitous folly an alteration or imitation planned and executed by John Dryden." We must not; therefore let "his gratuitous folly" stand aloof from theirs, and be judged of in itself. "The State of Innocence" is AN OPERA! "Had the subject been of a nature which admitted its being actually represented, we might conceive that Dryden, who was under engagements to the theatre, with which it was not always easy to comply, might have been desirous to shorten his own labour *by adopting the story, sentiments, and language of a poem*" (how kind and cool) "which he so highly esteemed, and which *might probably* have been new to the generality of his audi-

ence. But the *costume* of our first parents, had there been no other objection, must have excluded 'The State of Innocence' from the stage; and, accordingly, it was certainly never intended for representation." One cannot well help agreeing with Sir Walter in this pleasant passage; nevertheless, might not the opera have been indited with a view to representation? With what more *rational* purpose could it have been "planned and executed?" The stage directions are full and minute; and, if meant for perusal only, and to be part of the poem, they are beyond the ridiculous. As, for example—

"Scene I represents a chaos, or a confused mass of matter; the stage is almost wholly dark. A symphony of warlike music is heard for some time; then from the heavens (which are opened) fall the rebellious angels, wheeling in air, and seeming transfixed with thunderbolts. The bottom of the stage being opened, receives the angels, who fall out of sight. Tunes of victory are played, and an hymn sung; angels discovered alone, brandishing their swords. The music ceasing, and the heavens being closed, the scene shifts, and, on a sudden, represents hell. Part of the scene is a lake of brimstone or rolling fire; the earth of a burnt colour. The fallen angels appear on the lake, lying prostrate; a tune of horror and lamentation is heard."

How all this might take with a mixed audience, we do not presume to conjecture, yet very great absurdities do sometimes take almost as well on as off the stage. Must "the *costume*, of our first parents, had there been no other objection, have excluded the 'State of Innocence' from the stage?" True, Sir Charles Sedley, and other "men of wit and fashion about town," were not well received when exhibiting themselves naked on a balcony overhanging a great thoroughfare; but then they were drunk, and acted not only indecent but insulting, nay, threatening attitudes, accompanied with oburgations and blasphemies, which was going injudiciously in advance of that age of refinement. Suppose Booth perfectly sober in Adam, and Nell Gwynne up merely to the proper pitch of vivacity in Eve, we do not see why the opera might not have had a run during the reign of the Merry Monarch. The first sight we have of Adam is, "as newly created, laid on a bed of moss and flowers, by a rock." He rises as he begins to utter his earliest soliloquy; and we believe it as an established rule not to turn your back on, or—in playhouse phrase—not to rump your audience. In such a case, how-

ever, considerable latitude would have been conceded by both sexes to our original; and what with shades and shrubs, and, above all, the rock, an adroit actor could have had little difficulty in accommodating to his posterity their progenitor. Of Eve our first glimpse is among "trees cut out on each side, with several fruits upon them; a fountain in the midst; at the far end the prospect terminating in walks." Nelly might have worn her famous felt chapeau, broad as a coach-wheel, as appropriately in that as in any other character, and contrived to amble about with sufficient decorum for those fastidious times. Besides, as custom soon reconciles people to the most absurd dress, so would it probably, before long, reconcile them to no dress at all. A full-bottomed wig in the mimic scene, on heroic representative of a class of men, who, off the boards, had always worn, not only their own hair, but a crop, was a *sine qua non* condition of histrionic success. *In puris naturalibus* would have been but to fall back on nature. Why, only a couple of years ago, half a million of our countrymen and countrywomen of all ages, flocked by instalments, in a single season, to look at our First Parents fresh from the hands of a French painter, naked as you were born. Such is the power of Names. No imagination—not the least in the world—had that painter; no sense—not the least in the world—of the beautiful or of the sublime in the human figure. But the population, urban and rural alike, were unhappy till they had had a sight of Adam and Eve in Paradise. We cheerfully acknowledge that Adam was a very good-looking young fellow—bang up to the mark, six feet without his shoes—close upon thirteen stone. Had he been advertised as Major Adam of the Scots Greys, the brevet would have exhibited himself on that bank to empty benches. In like manner, with the fairest of her daughters, Eve. As Pope says,

"Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
'Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."

Pious old gentlemen, however, pronounced her perfect, merely because they gazed on the image of the mother of mankind. Painted they both were in oils. But from what we saw—for we too were carried away by the general enthusiasm—we are justified in inferring that, under prudent management, our First Parents might be successfully got up alive during the summer season at our Adelphi.

We believe that "The State of Innocence" *was* written for the stage. But the playwright did not intend that Adam and Eve should be stark-naked in the acted opera. Strange to say, there is not a word in it about their naked majesty or innocence. Dryden, by his idea of an opera, was forced to depart from nature and Milton. Eve's dream, so characteristically narrated by her to Adam in the poem, is shadowed out by a vision passing before her asleep, in the opera. The stage direction gives—"A vision, where a tree rises loaded with fruit; spirits rise with it, and draw a canopy out of the tree; and the spirits dance about the tree in deformed shapes; after the dance an angel enters, *with a woman, HABITED LIKE EVE.*" That is decisive.

But what of the opera? In the preface, Dryden says, "I cannot, without injury to the deceased author of 'Paradise Lost,' but acknowledge, that the poem has received *its entire foundation, part of the design, and many of the ornaments from him.* What I have borrowed will be so easily discerned from my mean productions, that I shall not need to point the reader to the places." That avowal may be thought to set aside all criticism—but not so—for his illustrious editor says, "the probable motive therefore of this alteration was the wish, so common to genius, to exert itself upon a subject on which another had already attained brilliant success; or, as Dryden has termed a similar attempt, the desire to shoot in the bow of Ulysses." And he adds, that because Milton intended at first to model his poem into a dramatic form, Dryden, conscious of his own powers, and enthusiastically admiring those of Milton, was induced to make an experiment on the forsaken plan of the blind bard, which, with his usual rapidity of conception and execution, he completed in the short space of one month." Wide-encroaching Walter would see nothing far wrong in Glorious John. It is not "the forsaken plan of the blind bard," nor anything in the least like it. They are opposite as any things that "own antipathy in nature." But this is all mere nonsense. The opera is disgraceful to Dryden. It proves that he had no understanding of the "Paradise Lost."

"Ay, you may *tag* my verses, if you will." But had Milton lived to hear their taggery, wrathful fire would have been in his eyes.

The opera opens, as we saw, in chaos, the scene sinking into hell, and we have Lucifer "raising himself on the Lake."

His exclamatory speech, of some sixteen lines, on the lake is versified, not in Dryden's best manner, from that most sublime one of Satan on reaching with Beelzebub the burning marle, with some additions from Satan's first address to that angel, while yet they were lying side by side on the fiery flood. To those who have the First Book of the "Paradise Lost" by heart, this sort of transposition patchwork cannot but be most offensive. As if to give an air of originality, where everything is borrowed and blurred, Asmoday, in Milton one of the lowest, is made one of the highest, and is substituted for Beelzebub—and to him Lucifer most unmarch-angel-like calls "Ho! Asmoday, awake!"

Asmoday answers in a short speech very ill reported, formerly delivered by Milton's Beelzebub, concluding with a bit absolutely stolen from his Satan himself! Lucifer then observes to Asmoday, that "our troops, *like scattered leaves in autumn*, lie!" A poor plagiarism indeed from the famous description from Milton's own lips, and from Lucifer's incredibly absurd! Lucifer then announces—

"With wings expanded wide, ourselves we'll rear,
And fly incumbent on the dusky air.
Hell! thy new lord receive!
Heaven cannot envy me an empire here."
(*Both fly to dry land.*)

You remember the lines in Milton—

"Then with expanded wings he steers his flight,
Aloft incumbent on the dusky air"—

and the other sublimities of the description—all here destroyed by the monstrous absurdity of making Lucifer paint his own projected flight. He then asks "the rest of the devils," "Are you on *beds of down*?" On beds of down our grand-sires lay—but think of eider-ducks in heaven. Moloch says his say from the Miltonic Satan, with a slight new reading.

"Better to *rule* in hell than serve in heaven."

And Beelzebub approves the dictum.

"Moloch, in that all are resolved, like thee.
The means are unprepared; but 'tis not fit,
Our dark divan in public view should sit;
Or what we plot against the Thunderer,
The ignoble crowd of vulgar devils hear!"

Lucifer adopts this disdainful suggestion, and, great magician as he is, exclaims—

"A golden palace let be raised on high,
To imitate—no, to outshine the sky!
All mines are ours, and gold above the rest;
Let this be done, and *quick as 'twas exprest*."

"A palace rises, where sits in council, **LUCIFER**, Asmodey, Moloch, Belial, Beelzebub, and **SATAN**." Who *he* may be, deuce take us if we can tell. Up to the very moment of his making his appearance, we in our simple faith had believed Lucifer and Satan to be one devil—nay, the devil. We were taken quite aback by this unexplained phenomenon of Satan's acting the part of his own tail. In this capacity he makes but one speech—but it is the speech of the evening. One seldom hears such eloquence. Moloch having proposed battle, the mysterious stranger rises to second the motion.

"*Satan.* I agree
With this brave vote; and if in Hell there be
Ten more such spirits, heaven is our own again.
We venture nothing, and may all obtain.
Yet, who can hope but well, since our success
Makes foes secure, and makes our dangers less?
Seraph and Cherub, careless of their charge
And wanton, in full ease now live at large:
Unguarded leave the passes of the sky,
And all dissolved in hallelujahs lie."

In the "grand consult," as recorded by Milton, Beelzebub, after proposing the "perilous attempt," asks,

"But first, whom shall we send
In search of this new world? Whom shall we find
Sufficient? who shall tempt with wandering feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure find out
His uncouth way, or spread his aery flight,
Upborne with indefatigable wings
Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive
The happy isle?"

And Satan is the self-chosen missionary of the religion of Hell. In Dryden Asmodey suggests the enterprise, and

"*Moloch.* This glorious enterprise—(*rising up*).
Lucifer. Rash angel, stay. (*Rising and laying his sceptre on*
Moloch's head).

That palm is mine, which none shall take away.
Hot braves like thee may fight, but know not well
To manage this, the last great stake of hell."

The council comes to a close—and Lucifer promises to be with them again,

“Before yon brimstone lake thrice ebb and flow.”

Tides in the Mediterranean ! a touch beyond Milton.

“Here, while the chiefs sit in the palace, may be expressed the sports of the devils, as flights and dancing in grotesque figures ; and a song, expressing the change of their condition, what they enjoyed before, and how they fell bravely in battle, having deserved victory by their valour, and what they would have done if they had conquered.”

What had Dryden purposed to achieve ? Out of two books of a great epic, to edify one act of an opera. To invention of situation, character, or passion, he aspires not ; all he had to do—since he must needs meddle—was to select, compress, and abridge, with some judgment and feeling, and to give the result—unhappy at the best—in his own vigorous verse and dearly-beloved rhyme. But beneath the majesty and imagination of Milton, his genius, strong as it was, broke down, and absolutely sunk beneath the level of that of common men. Yet not in awe, nor in reverence of a superior power ; for there is no trepidation of spirit ; on the contrary, with cool self-assurance he rants his way through the fiery gloom of hell. By his hands shorn of their beams, the fallen angels are, one and all, poor devils indeed. The Son of the Morning is seedy, and has lost all authority over the swell mob, which he vainly essays to recover by cracking Moloch’s organ with his sceptre. Yet Sir Walter, blinded by his generous admiration of Dryden’s great endowments, scruples not to say that “the scene of the consultation in Pandemonium, and of the soliloquy of Satan (not Satan, it seems, but Lucifer) on his arrival in the newly-created universe, would possess great merit did they not unfortunately remind us of the majestic simplicity of Milton.” Oh, heavens and earth ! the veritable Satan’s soliloquy on Niphate’s top !

“O thou, that with surpassing glory crowned,
Look’st from thy sole dominion like the God
Of this new world ; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminished heads, to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice, *and add thy name,*
O SUN ! to tell thee how I hate thy beams,
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere,
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
Warring in heaven against heaven’s matchless king !”

And so on for nearly a hundred lines, in many a changeful strain, archangelical all, of heaven-remembering passion, while ever, as thus he spoke,

"Each passion dimmed his face,
Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair;
Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld;
For heavenly minds, from such distempers foul
Are ever clear."

The soliloquy of Dryden's Lucifer consists of twenty lines, taken almost at hap-hazard from that of Milton's, jumbled together without consideration, and mangled from the most multitudinous blank verse ever written, into rhymes much beneath the average merit of one who, at times, could indeed command "the long-majestic march and energy divine."

Adam and Eve fare little better than the angels under his reforming fingers. Milton, you remember, makes Adam tell Raphael the story of his birth, in language charming to affable archangel's ear, albeit tuned to harmonies in heaven. Dryden burlesques that revelation into the following soliloquy, supposed to have been *the first words spoken by human lips*. Adam at once opens his mouth in the style of the age of refinement. After the fall, how degenerate kept growing on our father tongue, till it reached its acme in the barbarous lingo of Shakspeare! And how suited, here, the thought to the speech! How natural the natural theology of both! He anticipates Descartes.

"Adam. What am I! or from whence!

For that I am (rising)

I know, because I think; but whence I come,

Or how this frame of mine began to be,

What other being can disclose to me!

I move, and see, and speak, discourse, and know;

Though now I am, I was not always so.

Then that from which I was, must be before,

Whom, as my spring of being, I adore.

How full of ornament is all I view,

In all its parts! and seems as beautiful as new:

O goodly ordered earth! O Power Divine!

Of thee I am, and what I am is thine."

A day or two after, "a cloud ascends with six angels in it, and when it is near the ground breaks, and on each side, discovers six more." Raphael and Gabriel, sent to admonish and warn, discourse with Adam, the ten others standing

at a distance. The conversation instantly assumes, and throughout sustains, an intensely controversial character, and Raphael and Gabriel, though two to one, and moreover angel *versus* man, are hard put to it on predestination and free-will. Adam is equipped with all the weapons of the schools, and uses them defensively, and most offensively, with all the dexterity of a veteran gladiator. But our disgust soon ceases, along with our deception; and we but see and hear John Dryden puzzling a brace of would-be wits at Wills's. The whole reads like a so-so bit of the *Religio Laici*. It ends thus:—

"Adam. Hard state of life! since heaven foreknows my will,
Why am I not tied up from doing ill!
Why am I trusted with myself at large,
When he's more able to sustain the charge?
Since angels fell, whose strength was more than mine,
'Twould then more grace my frailty to confine.
Foreknowing the success, to leave me free,
Excuses him, and yet supports not me!"

This from Adam yet sinless in Paradise!

The loves of Adam and Eve are not perhaps absolutely coarse—at least not so for Dryden—yet they are of the earth earthy, and the earth is not of the mould of Eden. Aiblin's—not coarse, but verily coquettish, and something more is Eve. And she is too silly.

"From each tree
The feather'd kinds peep down to look on me;
And beasts with upcast eyes forsake their shade,
And gaze as if I were to be obey'd.
Sure I am somewhat which they wish to be,
And cannot. *I myself am proud of me.*"

A day or two after their marriage, Eve gives Adam a long description of her first emotions experienced in the nuptial bower. More warmly coloured than in her simplicity she seems to be aware of; and Adam, pleased with her innocent flattery, treats her with an Epithalamium.

"When to my arms thou brought'st thy virgin love,
Fair angels sang our bridal hymn above;
The Eternal, nodding, shook the Firmament!
And conscious nature gave her glad consent.
Roses unbid, and every fragrant flower
Flew from their stalks to strew thy nuptial bower:
The furr'd and feather'd kinds the triumph did pursue,
And fishes leap'd above the streams the passing pomp to view."

Hats off—bravo—bravo—hurra—hurra!—Of such stuff is

made, in the "State of Innocence," Dryden's implicit criticism on the *Paradise Lost* of Milton.

Peace be with his shade! and its forgiveness with us. It is dangerous to unite the functions of judge and executioner. The imperiturbable bosom of the seated judge calmly gives forth the award of everlasting justice, and the mandate for the punishment that must expiate or appease her violated majesty. But the judge who is obliged to turn lictor, and must step down from the tribunal to take his criminal farther in hand, undoubtedly runs a risk, when he feels his hand in, of being carried too far by his excited zeal. After all, we have stayed ours. And now, having discharged a principal part of our office, what remains, but that we turn round, heal with our right hand what our left has inflicted, and lift up glorious John to the skies? And lift him up we will; and with good reason; for we are far, indeed, from being done with this first era of deliberate and formal criticism in English literature. Extol him to the clouds and to the stars we will, but not now; for lo! where another great name beckons!

The close of the seventeenth century forever shut the eyes of John Dryden upon the clouded and fluctuating daylight of our sublunary world. It may have been in the same year, that a solitary boy, then twelve years old, wrote five stanzas which any man might have been glad to have written—and which you have by heart—an "Ode to Solitude,"—conspicuous in the annals of English poetry as the dawn-gleam of a new sun that was presently to arise, and to fill the region that Dryden had left.

A feeble frame has dedicated many a student. This, with other causes about this time, took the boy, ALEXANDER POPE, from schools where he learned little to commit him, under the guardian more than guiding love of indulgent parents, to his own management of his own studies. And study he did—instinctively, eagerly, ramblingly, through books of sundry kinds—helping himself as he could to their languages—devouring more than he digested—wedding himself to the high and gracious muses—seeking for, and finding, his own extraordinary powers—and diminishing the small quantity of delicate health which nature had put in his keeping. He resigned himself to die, and was dying, when a strong interposition, among other sanitary measures, transferred him from the back of Pegasus to that of an earth-born horse.

Pope had a gentleness of spirit, which showed itself in his filial offices to his father and mother—to her the most, in the prolonged wearing out of a beloved life. It appears in kindly relations to his friends, in charities, in the scheme of his life—contentedness in a bounded, quiet existence, a seclusion among books, and trees, and flowers. His life flowed on peaceably and gently, like the noble river upon which his modest dwelling looked. Ill health, as we said, often dedicates a student. The constitutional feebleness from which he suffered, might doubly favour his mind; as often the more delicate frame harbours the greater spirit; and as inaptitude for active and rough sports throws the solitary boy upon the companionship of books, and upon the energies, avocations and pleasures of his own intelligence and fancy. The little poem of his boyhood, and the first of his manhood, prophesy his tenour of life, and his literary career.

A commanding power, a predominant star in English literature—you might say that the last century belonged to him. Dryden reigned over his cotemporaries. Pope, succeeding, took dominion over his own time and the following. The pupil of Dryden, and gratefully proud to proclaim the greatness of his master, and to own all obligations, he moulded himself nevertheless upon a type in his own mind. In the school of Dryden he is an original master. Dryden is, properly speaking, without imitators. His manner proceeds from his own genius, and baffles transcribers. But Pope completed an art which could be learned, and he left a world full of copyists.

A remarkable feature is the early acknowledgment of Pope by his cotemporaries. At sixteen he is a poet for the world by his *PASTORALS*, and at that age he has a literary adviser in Walsh and a literary patron in Trumbull. He does not seem to court. He is courted. He is the intimate friend, we do not know how soon, of scholars and polite writers, of men and women high in birth, in education, in station. Scarce twenty, by his "*ESSAY ON CRITICISM*" he assumes a chair in the school of the Muses. At five-and-twenty he is an acknowledged dictator of polite letters. So early, rapid, untroubled an ascension to fame, it would require some research to find a parallel to. Our literature has it not. And this acknowledgment, gratulation, triumph, which friends and circles, and the confined literary world of that day in this

country could furnish, a whole age and a whole country, and a whole world, the extended republic of letters, confirm.

In the judgment of England, in the eighteenth century, the reputation of Pope may be called the most dazzling in English literature. It was a nearer sun than Dryden, Milton, Shakspeare; as for Spenser and Chaucer, they were little better than fixed stars.

Great revolutions in the state of the heavens and of astronomical science have ensued. To say nothing of new luminaries that have come into birth, from the bosom of "chaos and unoriginal night," either we have wheeled round upon Shakspeare, or he upon us, in a surprising manner; the orb of Milton enlarges day by day; cheerily we draw large accessions of the gentlest light from Spenser; and old Father Geoffrey and we are sensibly approximating.

We have taken Pope's counsel. We have with some good-will reverted to Nature, and so we come nearer to the poets of Nature. There may have been other causes at work. The change has involved more than was just a depreciation of Pope himself: as if he were an accomplished artist in a limited sphere of art, and no poet. We dissent *toto corde et toto celo*. He was a spirit, muse-born, a hero of half celestial extraction, and so by all rule a demigod.

His age confined him. A poet is not independent of his age. He may ride on the van of the tide—no more. And we see that the greatest poets are but the most entire expression of the age, taken at the best. How shall it be otherwise? Their age is mother and nurse to them. And what air does a poet respire, but the circulating, fanning, living breeze of sympathy? He more than all beings receives into his soul the souls of other men. So he thrives and grows; and shall he not be a partaker in his age?

In an age thus to be described, that it refines instead of creating, and that, in particular, it imposes the refinement elaborated by social, and indeed aristocratical manners, upon genius, which should only refine itself by tenderness and sanctity, and by love dwelling evermore in the inextinguishable paradise of the beautiful—he who was fitted to his age by much of his mind, by his wit, by fancy given more fully than imagination, by inclination to the *limes labor*, by the susceptibility of polish, by a reasonableness of understanding, by his perception of manners, even by the delicacy of his habits—he, ALEXANDER POPE, nevertheless, desired the great-

nesses of poetry. At fourteen, he tries his hand in practice on the lofty Statius—at five-and-twenty, upon the sublime Homer. Judge of his poetical heart by his Preface to Shakespeare, by his translation of Homer, preface and all. What was the translation of Homer? Of all works not creative, the one of most aspiring ambition, even more than that of Pindar or Æschylus. The young poet who has launched on the air the light, self-buoyed, gracefully-floating Rape of the Lock, who has dipped his pen in the paths of love and religion for Eloisa, longs to put in use the powers that kindle and struggle with him. He will do something of greater design in weightier literature; he will, so as a poet may, stir, melt, strengthen, instruct, exalt, and amplify the mind of his country; and he makes the greatest of poets, the father of all poetry—ENGLISH. He pledges himself, before his country, to the task, and then trembles at the difficulties and magnitude of his undertaking, and then sits down to it, and then delivers it accomplished.

Did Homer already speak English, through the organ of Chapman? If he did, it was not English for England; least of all, for the England of Pope's day. Fiery and eloquent, and creative as it is, Chapman's *Homer* is hard reading now, and somewhat rare. Then, the book was, for the general capacity, precisely the same thing as if it were not. And Pope, no grudging bestower of merited honours, awards generous praise to his irregularly-great predecessor, amply acknowledging, with one word, in him both native power and effectual sympathy with their unparagoned original.

Let us reflect, also, that after all a true translation of Homer into English is, in all probability, a thing impossible. Why did not Milton leave us half a book, or some fifty verses, that we might know what the utmost poetical power, and the utmost mastery of our speech, and the utmost resources of our verse, could effect? The inspiring expressive music of the original tongue clothes the simplest and most unadorned word and phrase in wealth, splendour, gorgeous majesty, prodigal magnificence; and this, not with any incongruence or disharmony, any more than Eve's GOLDEN tresses were excessive ornament, unmeet for the primitive simplicity of Eden. The same exhilaration and vivification of the hearing soul, which this perpetual music infuses, united to the same simplicity of the thought and the words, will not easily be found in English. Again, rhyme seems wanted to the richness of

the harmony. Yet how shall rhyme allow that utmost freedom and range in the flow of the thought which marks the now majestically, now impetuously sweeping Homeric river? That measure, so *measured*, and yet so free; large, various, capacious—that hexameter is despair. Meanwhile no nation concludes to forego the incorporation of the great foreign works of literature into its own, merely for such discouragement, merely because the adequate representation lies wholly out of reach. We have gained much in bringing over the powerful matter, if we must leave the style behind, and yet the style is almost a part of the matter.

Homer is out of hand—Iliad and Odyssey. The Mæonian sun has ripened the powers of the occidental poet. And Pope—*aged thirty-seven*—declares that henceforward he will write *from*, as well as *to*, his own mind. The “*ESSAY ON MAN*” follows. It expresses that graver study of the universal subject, *MAN*, which appeared to Pope, now self-known, to be, for the time of poetical literature to which he came, the most practicable—for his own ability the aptest; and it embodies that part of anthropology which doubtless was the most congenial to his own inclination—the philosophical contemplation of man’s nature, estate, destiny.

The success of this enterprise was astonishing. Be the philosophy what and whose it may, the poem revived to the latest age of poetry the phenomenon of the first, when precept and maxim were modulated into verse, that they might write themselves in every brain, and live upon every tongue.

The spirit and sweetness of the verse, the lucid and vivid expressions, the pregnant brevity of the meanings, the marvelling of ardent and lofty poetical imaginings to moral sentiments and reflections, of which every bosom is the birth-home, the pious will of the argument, which humbles the proud and rebellious human intellect under the absolute rectitude and benevolence of the Deity—nor, least of all, the pleasure of receiving easily, as in a familiar speech, thoughts that *were* high, and *might be* abstruse, that, at all events, wore a profound and philosophical air—with strokes intervening of a now playful, now piercing, but always adroit wit—and with touches, here and there strewn between, of natural painting, and of apt unsought pathos—these numerous and excellent qualifications met upon the subject of all subjects nearest to all—*MAN*—speedily made the first great, original, serious writing of Pope a text-book and a manual for its branch of

ethico-theosophy, in every house where there were books in England. These powerful excellences of this great poem did more. They inwove its terse, vigorous, clear, significant, wise, loving, noble, beautiful, and musical sentences—east, west, north, south,—with all memories, the mature and the immature—even as in that old brave day of the world or ever books were.

Pause, gentle reader, for a while, and reflect kindly on these paragraphs for the sake of Alexander Pope and Christopher North. And now accompany us while we select our specimens of the British critics, from the "Nightingale of Twickenham's" preface to the works of Shakspeare. What he proposed to accomplish in this undertaking was, "to give a more correct text from the collated copies of the old editions, without any innovation or indulgence to his own private sense, or conjecture; to insert the various readings in the margin, and to place the suspected passages or interpolations at the bottom of the page; to this was added an explanation of some of the more obsolete or unusual words; and such as appeared to him the most striking passages were marked by a star, or by inverted commas." Warton laments that Pope ever undertook this edition; "a task which the course of his reading and studies did not qualify him to execute with the ability and skill which it deserved, and with which it has since been executed;" but though it was a failure, there was no occasion for lamentation. Johnson says more wisely, "that Pope did many things wrong, and left many things undone, but let him not be defrauded of his due praise. He was the first that knew, or at least the first that told by what helps the text might be improved. If he inspected the early editions negligently, he taught others to be more accurate. In his preface he expanded with great skill and eloquence the character which had been given of Shakspeare by Dryden; and he drew the public attention upon his works, which, though often mentioned, had been little read."

Warton, too, admits that the "preface is written with taste, judgment, purity, and elegance." Pope speaks modestly of the design of his preface, which is not, he says, to enter into a criticism upon Shakspeare, "though to do it effectually, and not superficially, would be the best occasion that any just writer could take to form the judgment and taste of our nation." His humbler aim is but to give an account of the fate of his works, and the disadvantages under which they

have been transmitted to us. But he cannot neglect the opportunity thus afforded him, "of mentioning some of the principal and characteristic excellences for which (notwithstanding his defects) *he is justly and universally elevated above all other dramatic writers.*"

"If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakspeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of nature; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning; or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakspeare was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an imitator, as an instrument of Nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

"His *characters* are so much nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakspeare is as much an individual as those in life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike; and such as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will, upon comparison, be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character, we must add the wonderful preservation of it; which is such throughout his plays, that had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker.

"The *power* over our *passions* was never possessed in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide or guess the effect, or be perceived to lead toward it; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places; we are surprised at the moment we weep; and yet, upon reflection, find the passion so just, that we should be surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

"How astonishing is it, again, that the passions directly opposite to these, laughter and spleen, are no less at his command? that he is not more a master of the *great* than the *ridiculous* in human nature; of our noblest tendernesses, than

of our vainest foibles ; of our strongest emotions, than of our idlest sensations !

“ Nor does he only excel in the passions ; in the coolness of reflection and reasoning he is full as admirable. His *sentiments* are not only in general the most pertinent and judicious upon every subject ; but by a talent very peculiar, something between penetration and felicity, he hits upon that particular point on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each motive depends. This is perfectly amazing, from a man of no education or experience in those great and public scenes of life which are usually the subject of his thoughts ; so that he seems to have known the world by intuition, to have looked through human nature at one glance, and to be the only author that gives ground for a very new opinion, that the philosopher, and even the man of the world, may be *born*, as well as the poet.”

Nothing can be better. Dryden gave us large and grand outlines. Pope's is closer criticism. But it is more than that which Johnson says, that all the successors of Dryden have produced an expansion only of his notions ; unless, in that sense in which every follower in time could by possibility do nothing but expand the notions of the first critic who should have said—“Shakspeare was a poet of the highest description, with a good many troublesome faults.” Pope's portraiture is drawn from near and intent inspection ; a likeness after the life, and reflecting the life ; thoroughly independent of anything preceding him. Thus, THE COMPLETE SEVERING OF NEARLY-ALLIED PERSONAGES (upon which Pope insists, and which, more than the immense multiplicity, contemplated in a general way, of the some hundred DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, determines essential variety ; attests the constituting of every character, after the manner of Nature, from an indivisible SELF, which at once rules it into unity, and holds it unconfused with all others) is a finely-just observation of which we have not a hint from Dryden ; and it carries us, instantly, deep into a most interesting study of comparisons. As of Macbeth and Richard III, both murderous usurpers, as different as two men can well be ; of Leontes and Othello, two jealous husbands, and as different, even in their jealousy, as two men can be ; of Coriolanus and Hotspur, each an earthly Mars : each “the soul of honour ;” each sudden in passion, impetuous, and ungovernable ; each with a kindliness of nature that draws and attaches his friends as much as the

superiority of his character overrules them; each with a rough, abrupt, penetrating strength of intellect; each endowed, which is more peculiar, with vivid imagination, that leaps into bold poetical figures; each of a cutting wit, and, in his own way, a humorous pleasantry; and yet the semi-traditionary Roman patrician, and the quite historical English earl's son, so distinct that you shall read the two plays, in which they are, ten and twenty times over, without thinking of putting the towering heroes, twinned by so many, so marked, and so profound affinities, upon a line of comparison. Or put all Shakspeare's gallant warriors in a catalogue, and what a diversified list have you drawn up! Hector, Troilus, Diomed, Coriolanus, Tullus Aufidius, Mark Antony, Othello, Cassio, nay, and Iago, Falconbridge, Hotspur, Glendower, Mortimer, Henry V, Talbot, Warwick, Richard III, Richmond, Macbeth, Banquo, Macduff, Old Seward, Edmund, Edgar, Benedict, Bertram, are some of them; for Shakspeare, like Scott, loved a good soldier. Compare the melancholy Halmet and the melancholy Jaques; both shrewd observers of men; both given to philosophizing; and yet different—Heaven knows. And so on. Thus, the remark of Pope goes to the root of Shakspeare's creative art, and leads you into a method of thinking, not soon exhausted.

We endeavour, says Dryden, to follow the VARIETY and greatness of characters that are derived to us from Shakspeare and Fletcher. But does this most general attribution of a characteristic—shared with Fletcher—and such as the loosest observation of the plays forces upon the most uncritical reader—does the accident that Dryden left this inevitable word "VARIETY" written, make the critical observation of Pope no more than a "diffusing" and "paraphrasing" of Dryden's "Epitome?" Has he only "changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value, though of greater bulk? It would at least be as near the truth to say, that he has made Dryden's bill good money by accepting it. Pope, in the precise and critical sense in which he has attached the praise of "variety" to Shakspeare, would certainly not have communicated the praise, with him, to Fletcher.

Shakspeare, says Dryden, "drew the images of Nature, not laboriously, but luckily." "All along," says Pope, "there is seen no labour, no pains to raise the passions, no preparation to lead towards the effect; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places." The

unstudied, spontaneous movement of the scene, in Shakspeare, both of the Action and of the Passion, as if everything went on of its own impulse, and not as willed and ruled by the poet, is an imitation of Nature which no other dramatist has so closely urged. Pope insists upon it—for the passion, at least. Is this characteristic already contained in the “not laboriously, but luckily,” of Dryden? If it is contained, it is hardly conveyed. A seed has dropped from the hand of Dryden. Under the gardening of Pope, it springs up into a fair and fairly-spread plant. That is a sort of “diffusion” very distinct from turning gold into base metal. So Pope of himself admires that, in the comedies, histories and tragedies of the unversed Shakspeare, all the businesses, high and low, of human life, turn upon their own hinges.—If a statesman counsel, he lays down the very grounds of proceeding which grayheaded statesmanship would have propounded—a king reigns like a king, a soldier fights like a soldier, a woman loves and hates like a woman, a clown is a clown, a thief is a thief. In short, besides the individual constitution and self-consistency of the CHARACTERS, besides the spontaneous and self-timed motion of the PASSIONS, we are further and distinctly to admire this—that the springs, the constitution, and the government of ACTION are imitated;—as if the inexperienced player from Avon side, had stood personally, confidentially, participatingly present in the heart of all human transactions. And if it appears to the acute critic wonderful that Shakspeare should have found, in his own bosom, the archetypes of so many and so diverse individualities, that he should have found there the law given by original nature for the flow and current, the impulsion, the meandering, and the precipitation of the *passions*; it strikes him as yet more wonderful, more like an inspiring, that he should have found there a divination of that which is subsequent to and ingrafted upon Nature—namely, of human life itself, of universal human experience; much in the same way as Ulysses admired most, in the song of Demodocus, his knowledge of that which had passed withinside the Wooden Horse, and concluded, hence, to the undoubted inspiration of the Muse.

This appears to us to be the meaning of Pope’s eulogy; and if it but unfolds the hints of Dryden’s, it unfolds them, be it said, uninvincibly, something after the fashion in which Shakspeare himself unfolded the hints which he found in old

books of plots and personages; that is to say originally, creatively, with quite independent power; and certainly with no deterioration to the matter. Pope goes on to admit faults. We must here dissent as to facts and opinions, and must qualify.

"It must be owned, that with all these great excellences, he has almost as great defects; and that as he has certainly written better, so he has perhaps written worse than any other. But I think I can in some measure account for these defects, from several causes and accidents; without which it is hard to imagine that so large and so enlightened a mind could ever have been susceptible of them. That all these contingencies should unite to his disadvantage seems to me almost as singularly unlucky as that so many various, nay, contrary talents should meet in one man was happy and extraordinary.

"It must be allowed that stage poetry, of all other, is more particularly leveled to please the *populace*, and its success more immediately depending upon the *common suffrage*. One cannot therefore wonder, if Shakspeare, having at his first appearance no other aim in his writings than to procure a subsistence, directed his endeavours solely to hit the taste and humour that then prevailed. The audience was generally composed of the meaner sort of people, and therefore the images of life were to be drawn from those of their own rank; accordingly we find, that not our author's only, but almost all the old comedies have their scene among *tradesmen* and *mechanics*; and even their historical plays strictly follow the common *old stories* or *vulgar traditions* of that kind of people. In tragedy, nothing was so sure to *surprise* and cause *admiration*, as the most strange, unexpected, and consequently most unnatural events and incidents; the most exaggerated thoughts; the most verbose and bombast expression; the most pompous rhymes, and thundering versification. In comedy, nothing was so sure to *please* as mean buffoonery, vile ribaldry, and unmannerly jests of fools and clowns. Yet even in these, our author's wit buoys up, and is borne above his subject; his genius in those low parts is like some prince of a romance in the disguise of a shepherd or peasant; a certain greatness and spirit now and then break out, which manifest his higher extraction and qualities.

"It may be added, that not only the common audience had no notion of the rules of writing, but few even of the

better sort piqued themselves upon any great degree of knowledge or nicety that way, till Ben Jonson, getting possession of the stage, brought critical learning into vogue; and that this was not done without difficulty, may appear from those frequent lessons (and indeed almost declamations) which he was forced to prefix to his first plays, and put into the mouth of his actors, the *grex*, *chorus*, &c., to remove the prejudices, and inform the judgment of his hearers. Till then, our authors had no thoughts of writing on the model of the ancients: their tragedies were only histories in dialogue; and their comedies followed the thread of any novel as they found it, no less implicitly than if it had been true history.

“To judge, therefore, of Shakspeare by Aristotle’s rules, is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who acted under those of another. He writ to the *people*; and writ at first without patronage from the better sort, and therefore without aims of pleasing them; without assistance or advice from the learned, as without the advantage of education or acquaintance among them; without that knowledge of the best of models, the ancients, to inspire him with an emulation of them: in a word, without any views of reputation, and of what poets are pleased to call immortality: some or all of which have encouraged the vanity, or animated the ambition of other writers.

“Yet it must be observed, that when his performances had merited the protection of his prince, and when the encouragement of the court had succeeded to that of the town, the works of his riper years are manifestly raised above those of his former. The dates of his plays sufficiently evidence that his productions improved, in proportion to the respect he had for his auditors. And I make no doubt this observation would be found true in every instance, were but editions extant from which we might learn the exact time when every piece was composed, and whether writ for the town or the court.”

Pope here apologizes for the very middling sort of company which Shakspeare, in his Comedies, obliges us to keep, by the obligation he was under of “holding the mirror up to his hearers,” who being, for the most part, “the meaner sort of people,” would only duly recognize and sympathize with “images of life drawn from those of their own rank.” And so we have a pardonable cause, wherefore “our author’s (like “almost all the old”) Comedies “HAVE THEIR SCENE among TRADESMEN and MECHANICS;” and some excuse for the degra-

dation of history by the historical plays, which strictly follow the common old stories or vulgar traditions of that sort of people.

The DEFENCE is kindly ; and bears with it, we must acknowledge, a specious air. In the mean time, here lacks surely something to the regular ordering of the trial. Where, we should be glad to know, is the CORPUS DELICTI? Before justifying, let us hear some witnesses to the OFFENCE. Let us call over the Comedies. Here is the roll of them.

THE TEMPEST !—*Dramatis Personæ* :—Alonso, KING of Naples ;—Sebastian, HIS BROTHER ;—Prospero, the RIGHTFUL DUKE of Milan !—Antonio, HIS BROTHER, the USURPING DUKE of Milan !—Ferdinand, SON TO THE KING of Naples !—Gonzalez, an honest old COUNSELLOR of Naples !—Adrian, FRANCISCO, LORDS !—Really, we are afraid that all the ignobler males left, Caliban, a savage and deformed SLAVE ; Trinculo, a JESTER ; Stephano, a drunken BUTLER ; the MASTER OF A SHIP, the BOATSWAIN, and MARINERS—will not, any more than Miranda, with Ariel and the Spirits who personate in Prospero's masque, and who clear out the play bill, suffice to lay THE SCENE of the "Tempest" AMONG tradesmen and mechanics. Next come, handsomely cloaked and feathered in old Italian garb, "The Two GENTLEMEN of Verona !"

But we will not spare, any further, the curious reader the labour of turning over the leaves of his own copy, or of his memory. The truth is, as every reader's recollection at once answers, that the rule for the comedy of Shakspeare, respectively to the social degrees along which it moves, may be worded safely enough from the scheme of persons exhibited above. The comedy of Shakspeare removes itself, by two great strides, from the meaner sort of its auditory ; for light-footed, or more seriously-pacing, it loves to tread on floors of state ; it associates familiarly with the highly-born and the highly-natured. His Thalia is of a very aristocratic humour. But more than this, she further distances the vulgar associations and experience of her spectators, by putting between herself and them the Romance of Manners. We have seen the names—Naples, Milan Verona. Let us pursue the roll-call. In "Twelfth Night," the "scene" is a city in Illyria, and the sea-coast near it ;—in "Measure for Measure," VIENNA ;—in "Much Ado about Nothing," MESSINA ;—in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," ATHENS, AND A WOOD NOT FAR FROM IT ;—in "Love's Labour Lost,"

NAVARRÉ ;—in the "Merchant of Venice," PARTLY AT VENICE, AND PARTLY AT BELMONT, THE SEAT OF PORTIA, ON THE CONTINENT (understand, of ITALY) ;—in "As You Like It," THE SCENE LIES, FIRST NEAR OLIVER'S HOUSE ; AFTERWARDS, PARTLY IN THE USURPER'S COURT, AND PARTLY IN THE FOREST OF ARDEN ;—in "All's Well that Ends Well," PARTLY IN FRANCE, AND PARTLY IN TUSCANY ;—in the "Taming of the Shrew," SOMETIMES IN PADUA, AND SOMETIMES IN PETRUCHIO'S HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY ;—in "The Winter's Tale" (a comedy, wherein only two of the personages die—one eaten), THE SCENE IS SOMETIMES IN SICILIA, SOMETIMES IN BOHEMIA ;—in the "Comedy of Errors," at EPHEBUS ;—last of all, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," in WINDSOR and the parts adjacent. THIRTEEN comedies lying in Italy, Illyria, Germany, Greece, France, Asia Minor, Sicily, Bohemia, and in that uninhabited island, inhabited by a day dream, and which lies nowhere. *One in England.*

We throw everything together. To Shakspeare the boarded stage is the field of imagination. He comes from the hand of Nature an essential poet. That he is a dramatic poet, should have two reasons. The first, given in his poetical constitution ; that the piercing and various inquisition of humanity for which he was gifted ; the intimate mastery of passion ; and the extraordinary activity of ratiocination which distinguish him, are satisfied only by the drama. Then, in the accident of the times—that as the stage rose from Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and they for the stage—so, with Shakspeare in England. At a certain point of the social progression, the theatre becomes the spot where poetry has living power. Shakspeare must seize upon the mind of his countrymen, as Homer took possession of Greece—VIVA VOCE. The silent and retired press is for the dream-like Spenser—for the star-like Milton. To Shakspeare, the Promethean maker of men and women, earthly-moulded if kindled into life with fire from heaven—give a stage and actors !—Give men and women, to personate men and women !—And give three thousand men and women, to throng roundabout, and look and listen—thrill and weep—suspended in one breathlessness ! But not because he has deigned to trace upon those actual boards his magical ring, and because within it his powerful art calls up no air-made phantasmagoria, but breathing and sentient *substantial* humanity ; not, therefore, is he less a magician—less a POET—less, if you will, a dreamer. Imagination is the faculty

which habitually divides him, as all his brotherhood, from us, the vulgar of mankind. To him the stage is the field of imagination; therefore, he avails himself of all allowed imaginative resources. Distance, in time and place, which renders indefinite; strange, picturesque, poetical manners, and regions, are such legitimate means. In particular, imagination prefers high rank to low, for half a dozen reasons. The outward show, state, pomp, retinue, splendour of costume, of habitation, of all daily accidental conditions;—these allure imagination, which, like grief, “is easily beguiled.” *EASE*, in human life, like that attributed to the heavenly divinities—the *παις ζωνει*;—the gods who live at ease, pleases imagination;—which might be justified. But imagination is not a light and idle child, to be won by the mere toy of a throne and robe, crown and sceptre. These are the signs of a universal homage rendered; and in this meaning, besides their natural richness and beauty, pleasing. Again, imagination itself does homage to stately power—not homage servile, as to that from which it dreads evil—but free homage, contemplatively, to a well-spring of momentous effects. The power that invests the person of a sovereign, of necessity clothes him in majesty. Again, many and grave destinies hang about high persons. Each stands for many of less note; and imagination is a faculty, taking delight in the representation of many by one. Besides, high persons carry on high actions; and they are free to act. They will, and straightway they do.

Here, then, is good cause why the imaginative drama, comic or tragic, shall delight in high persons. And you see, accordingly, that the plays of Shakspeare, of whatsoever description, move regularly amongst the loftily born—kings, independent dukes, nobles, gentlemen.

“The Emperor of Russia was my father:”

says the falsely accused Hermione, and you sympathize with her proud consciousness, and you **THE MORE** feel her abhorred indignity.

If Spenser could say, that it belongs to gentle blood to sit well on horseback—much more do the easy and inborn courage and worth of gentle blood bestride bravely, gracefully, lightly, and well, the careering, rearing, bounding, plunging, and headlong rushing horses of human destinies.

The fact, then, is this:—Shakspeare thus views the world; and he frames his idea of the drama accordingly.

What, then, does Pope mean, when he says that Shakspeare "lays his scene amongst tradesmen and mechanics?"

Surely he does not include under *tradesmen*, great *merchants*. Not, for example, the "Merchant of Syracuse," the grave and good old Ægeon, condemned to death in the "Comedy of Errors" because Ephesus and Syracuse have war. He and his fortune are as far away as a king with his—from the 'prentices of London. It is not the Venetian merchant, the princely Antonio, with his argosies, spice and silk laden, that Pope regards as letting down the dignity of the sock; nor, we hope, the Jew and usurer, Shylock; the sublime in indignation, when he vindicates to his down-spurned race the parity of the human tempering in body and soul; the sublime in hate, when he fastens like a devil his fangs—or prepares to fasten—in the quivering, living flesh of his Christian debtor.

No! these are not yet the key to the enigma—"tradesmen and mechanics."

In the "Midsummer Night's Dream," "a crew" of six "rude *mechanicals*," "hard-handed men," "that work for bread upon the Athenian stalls," enact two scenes wholly to themselves—*ONE*, which mixes them up with the fairies; and *ONE*, in the presence of Theseus, Duke of Athens, and of his fair warrior-bride Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons; to say nothing of *ONE*, or possibly two fairy scenes, which include one of the said "swaggering hempen homespuns," transformed by *faëry*.

Is *this* that "laying" of the "scene amongst tradesmen and mechanics," which has afforded our critic his absolute description of Shakspeare's comedy?

We greatly suspect that it had too much to do in suggesting the strange misrepresentation.

And is this all?

No! It is not.

There is one play that, by its whole invention, lies nearest the reality, which must be taken as habitually possessing the understandings of an English—a London—audience, in the reign of Elizabeth. It is that one comedy which haunts upon English ground—"The Merry Wives of Windsor." The complexion and constitution of the play lay it in the bosom—the manners are those—of *MIDDLE* English life.

Here are the persons:—Sir John Falstaff; Fenton, (he is Ann Page's lover: the list of the names assigns him no rank.

In conversation with mine host of the Garter, however, he asserts his own quality with, "as I am a gentleman;") Shallow, *a country justice*; Slender, *cousin to Shallow*; Mr. Ford, Mr. Page, *two gentlemen* dwelling at Windsor; William Page, a boy, *son to Mr. Page*; Sir Hugh Evans, *a Welsh Parson*; Dr. Caius, *a French physician*; *Host of the Garter Inn*; Bardolph, Pistol, Nym, *followers of Falstaff*; Robin, *page to Falstaff*; Simple, *servant to Slender*; Rugby, *servant to Dr. Caius*.

There is no need of adding two wives and a daughter. Here is the *toning* of that which we will take leave to call Shakspeare's *only unromantic and unaristocratical* comedy.

Was this written to please the "meaner sort" of people who frequented the playhouses?

Dennis hands down the tradition—which he may have had from Dryden, who may have had it from Sir W. Davenant—that "the comedy was written at the command of Queen Elizabeth, and *by her direction*." At all events, and whatsoever other tastes it courted and may have gratified, it won the favour of the highest audience. The quarto edition of 1602, describes it as having been "divers times acted by the right honourable my Lord Chamberlaine's servants, both before her majestie, and elsewhere;" and in the accounts of the *Revels at Court*, in the latter end of 1640, it figures as performed on the Sunday following November first, "by his Majestie's plaiers."

We have thus, in part explicitly, and in part summarily, documented the *ronx*, if it may be so called, of Shakspeare's Comic Theatre—being impelled so to do, first of all, by the duty of contradicting, the most injurious and utterly groundless characterization of a critic, whom we cite with the highest esteem and applause; further by the fear that the positive and unqualified averment of a high and critical authority might entrap a docile and easy reader into an unhappy *misrecollection* of his own true and clear knowledge upon the matter. Thirdly, we were not sorry to find ourselves engaged in clearing up, once for all, our own hitherto somewhat confused and insecure impressions. In the fourth place, we do always rejoice, and are irresistibly swayed from our equipoise, and are liable to be hurried any lengths, when we fall in with any opportunity of talking in any way about Shakspeare. But in particular we are glad to be obliged to approve and authenticate any general and grounding views of his poetry;

and it came not amiss to our humour, in this day of the world, to show how tenderly and reverently the Spirit, who has the most lovingly, largely, and profoundly comprehended humanity, viewed the mistrusted and assailed institutions which have all along built and sustained the societies of men. If there is "beauty" that "maketh beautiful old rhyme," there is verse that reacts upon its matter; the poetry of Shakspeare shall stand in the place of a more easily fallible political science, to strengthen, whilst it adorns the old pillars of man's world. Song can draw down the moon from the sky—song shall draw and charm many a rugged, uncouth, untamed understanding to a more submissive political docility.

But, indeed, there lurked one other less ambitious motive. What could the accurate Pope mean by this most inaccurate description of his author? We presume that there is an answer. The eulogy which precisely describes Shakspeare, is Pope's own. The imputations against Shakspeare, of which Pope will palliate the edge, are not Pope's. They are the impeachments laid by the adversary, which Pope, zealous of mitigating, too largely and hastily concedes. Standing, then, in bare and sharp opposition as they do to the fact, they may serve us as constituting a fact in themselves. They attest the opinion of the day—opinion, at least, prevalent high and wide, since Pope allows it. We can understand the opinion itself only as a confused and excessive exaggeration of the admixture which Shakspeare allowed to the lower comic, in comedy and in tragedy; as a protest—in which how far did Pope join?—against that admixture. The conclusion which this day will draw, must be, that the criticism of Shakspeare in polite circles, at that day, stood low.

"Another cause (and no less strong than the former) may be deduced from our author's being a *player*, and forming himself first upon the judgments of that body of men whereof he was a member. They have ever had a standard to themselves, upon other principles than those of Aristotle. As they live by the majority, they know no rule but that of pleasing the present humour, and complying with the wit in fashion; a consideration which brings all their judgment to a short point. Players are just such judges of what is *right*, as tailors are of what is *graceful*. And in this view it will be but fair to allow, that most of our author's faults are less to be ascribed to his wrong judgment as a poet, than to his right judgment as a player.

"By these men it was thought a praise to Shakspeare that he scarce ever *blotted a line*. This they industriously propagated, as appears from what we are told by Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*, and from the preface of Heminges and Condell to the first folio edition. But in reality (however it has prevailed) there never was a more groundless report, or to the contrary of which there are more undeniable evidences : as the comedy of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, which he entirely new writ; the *History of Henry VI*, which was first published under the title of *The Contention of York and Lancaster*, and that of *Henry V*, extremely improved ; that of *Hamlet* enlarged to almost as much again as at first, and many others. I believe the common opinion of his want of learning proceeded from no better ground. This too might be thought a praise by some, and to this his errors have as injudiciously been ascribed by others. For it is certain, were it true, it could concern but a small part of them ; the most are such as are not properly defects, but superfetations ; and arise not from want of learning or reading, but from want of thinking or judging ; or rather (to be more just to our author) from a compli-ance to those wants in others. As to a wrong choice of the subject, a wrong conduct of the incidents, false thoughts, forced expressions, &c., if these are not to be ascribed to the aforesaid accidental reasons, they must be charged upon the poet himself, and there is no help for it. But I think the two disadvantages which I have mentioned, (to be obliged to please the lowest of people, and to keep the worst of company,) if the consideration be extended as far as it reasonably may, will appear sufficient to mislead and depress the greatest genius upon earth. Nay, the more modesty with which such a one is endued, the more he is in danger of submitting and conforming to others against his own better judgment."

On the other hand, as the intellectual destiny of Shakspeare was to be the greatest of dramatists, the trade of a player had its advantages. He learned absolutely what a stage is, what actors can do, and what audiences are. Charles Lamb feebly maintained, that Shakspeare's Plays are unfitted for acting, by being above it. They are above reading too ; at least they are above most—why not say the truth at once—above all readers of them. Yet it would be a pity to leave them unread. They are the best fitted of all plays for acting ; for of all plays they best possess the stage, and command the

audience. In thus extolling the essential poetry of Shakspeare, he condemns his practical understanding, his art. He oversteps, too, the inabilities of the histrionic art. The inabilities of the histrions themselves, is another matter. The difficulty of understanding Shakspeare must not be turned into the impossibility of representing him when understood. The power, art, science, capacity, what you will, with which he has fitted his works to their immediate use, shows itself remarkably in this, that as a stage grows in its material means, the play comes out in power, splendour, majesty, magnificence, as if the stage but grew to the dimensions of that which it must contain ; and it must have been hundreds of times felt in the green room, that only the plays of Shakspeare try, and form actor and actress, foster and rear them to the height of their possible stature.

“ But as to his *want of learning*, it may be necessary to say something more ; there is certainly a vast difference between *learning* and *languages*. How far he was ignorant of the latter, I cannot determine ; but it is plain he had much reading at least, if they will not call it learning. For is it any great matter, if a man has knowledge, whether he has it from one language or another. Nothing is more evident than that he had a taste of natural philosophy, mechanics, ancient and modern history, poetical learning and mythology ; we find him very knowing in the customs, rites, and manners of antiquity. In *Coriolanus* and *Julius Cæsar*, not only the spirit, but manners of Romans are exactly drawn ; and still a nicer distinction is shown between the manners of the Romans in time of the former and of the latter. His reading in the ancient historians is no less conspicuous, in many references to particular passages ; and the speeches copied from Plutarch in *Coriolanus* may, I think, as well be made an instance of his learning as those copied from Cicero in *Catiline*, of Ben Jonson's. The manners of other nations in general, the Egyptians, Venetians, French, &c., are drawn with equal propriety. Whatever object of nature or branch of science he either speaks of or describes, it is always with competent, if not extensive knowledge ; his descriptions are still exact ; all his metaphors appropriated and remarkably drawn from the true nature and inherent qualities of each subject. When he treats of ethic or politic, we may constantly observe a wonderful justness of distinction as well as extent of comprehension. No one is more a master of the poetical story, or has

more frequent allusions to the various parts of it. Mr. Waller (who has been celebrated for this last particular) has not shown more learning this way than Shakspeare. We have translations from Ovid published in his name, among those poems which pass for his, and for some of which we have undoubted authority, (being published by himself, and dedicated to his noble patron, the Earl of Southampton.) He appears also to have been conversant in Plautus, from whom he has taken the plot of one of his plays. He follows the Greek authors, and particularly Dares Phrygius, in another; although I will not pretend to say in what language he read them. The modern Italian writers of novels he was manifestly acquainted with; and we may conclude him to be no less conversant with the ancients of his own country, from the use he has made of Chaucer in *Troilus and Cressida*, and in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, if that play be his, as there goes a tradition it was; and indeed it has little resemblance of Fletcher, and more of our author than some of those that have been received as genuine.

"I am inclined to think, this opinion proceeded originally from the zeal of the partisans of our author and Ben Jonson; as they endeavoured to exalt the one at the expense of the other. It is ever the nature of parties to be in extremes; and nothing is so probable, as that because Ben Jonson had much the more learning, it was said, on the one hand, that Shakspeare had none at all; and because Shakspeare had much the most wit and fancy, it was retorted, on the other, that Jonson wanted both. Because Shakspeare borrowed nothing it was said that Ben Jonson borrowed everything. Because Jonson did not write extempore, he was reproached with being a year about every piece; and because Shakspeare wrote with ease and rapidity, they cried he never once made a blot. Nay, the spirit of opposition ran so high, that whatever those of the one side objected to the other was taken at the rebound, and turned into praises; as injudiciously as their antagonists before had made them objections."

The learning of Shakspeare! Pope, like Dryden, has said well upon it. Shakspeare, the personal friend of men of highest rank, learning, genius; and reading in the English language as much as he chose of the wit and wisdom there entreasured, inherited the mind of the world. What will you have more? That he shall read his own spirit; and, therefore, is he above all men learned. As for that seeming

wildness and irregularity of his style, which many are inclined even at this day, to set down to his imperfect education, we beg you to recollect his more elaborate rhymed poems ; his *Venus and Adonis* ; his *Rape of Lucrece* ; his *Passionate Pilgrim* ; his *Sonnets*. And are you quite sure that some of the most finished, the strictest composition as to language and verse, of his age, shall not be found there, far beyond the experience or even comprehension of Dr. Parr and all his scholars ?

Reader, beloved from old, and with whom we have ever loved, on pleasant landing-place, in spacious article, lovingly to confabulate—while printer's devil, forgetful of copy, in the far depths of *Altsidora* indulged in snoreless sleep—reader, beloved anew, tell us who were the Greeks ? “They were that division of mankind in which Homer took mortal existence. Homer spoke Greek.” Good. And so three or five thousand years hence, somebody will be asking somebody, who were the English ? “Oh ! they inhabited the island in which Shakspeare was born ! Then, and a little while before and after. Shakspeare spoke English. He was an Englishman.” Good. Ay, ay, rough and ready ; and, gentle reader, in what civilized part of Central Africa such question and reply will be made, we predict not ; but you and we feel, that when and wheresoever the little dialogue shall occur, we two shall have for ourselves our own sufficient share of posthumous reputation, and eke Charles Knight. These twelve volumes always lying on their own line of our table, are Charles' edition of Shakspeare, alone of all our valuables uninsured at the Sun, for they are bound in asbestos. And now, obedient reader, listen to us lecturing, like a philosophical critic as we are, on *Pope's Essay on Criticism*, involved in these ten volumes, edited twenty years ago by William Roscoe, now with the saints.

Essay on Criticism ! What does one expect ? Criticism, be it noted, has two phases. This is the first. In its origin, it follows now afar, now close upon the works out of which it has arisen. It describes the methods which genius has half-instinctively, half-thoughtfully followed. It brings out into clear statement, certain movements and felt workings of genius : and it defines formal imitation to workers that shall come. It appears, therefore, as an embodying of rules. This is, in the main, the shape in which Criticism appears in classical antiquity. This was the meaning of the name with

Pope and his cotemporaries. "*Dicta sunt omnia*," remarks Quintilian, (insisting upon the order in which nature produces, first, the arts themselves, poetry or eloquence, in power—operative; *then*, the deduction and exposition of the method,) "*antequam præciperentur*." And so in Pope and his cotemporaries, we read of nothing but RULES—RULES—RULES! At this day, the word then in honour, grates, albeit a smooth one, upon one's ear. It seems to depress and to tame, to shut up and imprison thought, which would range and soar, and asks breath, and vigour, and liberty, from true Criticism. The truth is, that since that day the world has turned round, and we are turned philosophers. Thus the second phasis has arisen. We want no longer the rules, but the PRINCIPLES—the facts or the laws in our nature, and the nature of things about us, which have given out the rules; whence they flowed to Homer and to Demosthenes. We will drink from the fountains; not even from those "golden urns!" And with right and with reason, for we too are the children of nature. Besides, we will JUDGE Homer and Demosthenes. Without doubt, criticism, founded as an art empirical, tends continually to its second phasis, of a science grounding an art. And it is to be hoped that something towards this profounder constitution has been attained, and that we, in following down our critics, shall follow out some part of such a progress. In the mean time let us not rate our predecessors too low, merely upon the showing of their own modesty. Do not believe that Aristotle could propound a rule, through which a principle did not gleam out. And, in sooth, when this Essay sprang from the brain of Pope,—were not possibly the papers lying in the desk of Addison, in which he began, for our literature, the deliberate and express examination into the Philosophy of Criticism, within the domain of the beautiful in Art and Nature?

Addison, in a commendatory critique in the *Spectator*, said, that the observations in the Essay "follow one another without that methodical regularity that would have been requisite in a prose writer." And Warton, in opposition to Warburton, who asserted that it was a regular piece, written on a regular and consistent plan, has spoken scornfully of the Bishop's Commentary, and concluded in his usual forcible feeble way, that Pope had no plan in the poem at all. Roscoe spiritedly rates Warton for assuming to know Pope's mind better than Pope himself, who gave the commentary his in-

primatur. It may occasionally refine rather too ingeniously, but on the whole it is elucidatory, and Roscoe did well to give it entire in his edition of Pope. The Essay is in one book, but divided into three principal parts or numbers; and Warburton in a few words tells its plan:—"The first gives the rules for the study of the art of criticism; the second exposes the causes of wrong judgment; and the third marks out the morals of the critic." And Roscoe says, with equal truth, that "a certain degree of order and succession prevails, which leads the reader through the most important topics connected with the subject; thereby uniting the charm of variety with the regularity of art." Adding finely, that "poetry abhors nothing so much as the *appearance* of formality and restraint."

An excellent feature of the Essay, giving it practical worth, and interesting as native to the character of the writer, is the strenuous requisition to the poet himself, that he shall within his own soul, and for his own use of his own art, accomplish himself in criticism. It is recorded that Walsh, "the muses' judge and friend," said to Pope—"There is at least one virtue of writing in which an English poet of to-day may excel his predecessors; that is—CORRECTNESS." But it is more likely that the perception of this virtue in the poetical intellect of Pope drew out the remark from Walsh, than that the remark suggested to the poet the pursuit of the virtue. Pope, in his verse, in his prose, in his life, *rules himself*. Deliberated purpose, resolutely adopted and consistently executed, characterizes the man and the writer. It is nature, or some profounder control than a casual suggestion of a literary aim, that imparts this pervading character. As little could he owe to another the nice discrimination, the intellectual precision, the delicacy of perception—in a word, the critical sense and apprehension which make up one aspect of the mind, impressed upon the style, generally considered, of Pope. As far, then, as the virtue of correctness is to be predicated of his writings—and we do not believe that the countrymen of a poet go on predicating of him, for generation after generation, gratuitously—we must believe that we have to thank himself for it, and not Walsh.

We said, "UPON THE STYLE, GENERALLY CONSIDERED,"—for we acknowledge exceptions and contradictions to the general position; inaccuracies and incorrectnesses, that would make an answer to the question—"What is the CORRECTNESS OF POPE?" a somewhat troublesome affair. But we reco-

lutely insist that when, in his "Essay on Criticism," he calls upon the poet himself severely to school his own mind in preparation ; when he requires, that in working he shall not only feel and fancy, but understand, too ; when, in a word, he claims that he shall possess his art AS AN ART ; he speaks, his own spirit impelling ; and so stamps a fine personality, which is one mode of originality, on his work.

The praise that is uppermost in one's mind of the *Essay on Criticism*, is its rectitude of legislation. Pope is an orthodox doctor—a champion of the good old cause. Hence, after almost a century and a half, this poem of a minor (Warburton says his twentieth year) carries in our literature the repute and weight of an authority and a standard. It is of the right good *English* temper—thoughtful and ardent—discreet and generous—firm, with sensibility—bold and sedate—manly and polished. He establishes himself in well-chosen positions of natural strength, commanding the field ; and he occupies them in the style of an experienced leader, with forces judiciously disposed, and showing a resolute front every way of defence and offence. You do not curiously inquire into the novelty of his doctrines. He has done well if, in small compass, he has brought together, and vigorously compacted and expressed with animation, poignancy and effect, the best precepts. Such writing is beneficial, not simply by the truths which it newly propounds, or more luminously than heretofore unfolds, but by the authority which it vindicates to true art—by the rallying-point which it affords to the loyal adherents of the high and pure muses—by the sympathy which it wins, or confirms, to good letters—by its influence in dispersing pestilent vapours, and rendering the atmosphere wholesome.

In perusing the "Essay on Criticism," the reader is occasionally tempted to ask himself "whether he has under his eyes an art of criticism or an art of poetry." 'Tis no wonder; since, in some sort, the two arts are one and the same. They coincide largely; criticism being nothing else than the reasoned intelligence of poetry. Just the same spirit, power, precision, delicacy, and accomplishment of understanding, which reign in the soul of the great poet creating, rule in that of the good critic judging. The poet, creating, criticizes his own work ; he is poet and critic both. The critic is a poet without the creation. As Apelles is eye and hand, both ; the critic of Apelles is eye only. This identification, so far as it goes, has

been variously grounded and viewed. Of old, it was urged that only the poet is the judge of poetry, the painter of painting, the musician of music, and so on. Such positions proceed upon a high and reverential estimation of art. To judge requires the depth and sharpness of sensibility, the vivid and pathetic imagination, which characterize the artist. It asks more. To see the picture as it should be gazed upon, to hear the poem as it would be listened to, laborious preparation is needed—study, strenuous and exact, learned and searching—that ardent and lover-like communing with nature, the original of arts, and that experience in the powers, the difficulties, and the significancy of art, which only the dedication of the votary to the service of an art can easily be supposed to induce. There is, in practice, a verity and an intimacy of knowledge, without which theoretical criticism wants both light and life. So Pope contends—

“Let such judge others who themselves excel;
And censure freely, who have written well.”

He seems, at the same time, to be aware that this doctrine is not likely to find general favour; and that an objection will be taken up by those with whom it is unpalatable, grounded in the poet's liability to be seduced, beguiled, transported, misled, by his sympathy with that which is in the art specifically his own—the inventive power. And he admits the danger; but rebuts the objection by averring that, on the other side, the critic who is not a poet has his own temptation. He will be run away with by his intellectual propensities; the opinion of his own infallibility; the pleasure of pronouncing sentence—dispositions all that move to a hasty, and are adverse to a generous, decision.

“Poets are partial to *their wit*, 'tis true,
But are not critics to *their judgment*, too?”

The two arts, poetry and the criticism of poetry, thus running together, so as that in the mind of the poet they are one thing, and that it is hard well to distinguish in speaking of them in prose, it will not seem surprising if Pope, intending to write of the lesser, and so inveigled into writing of the greater, should not always distinctly know of which he writes.

Let us cite a celebrated passage as an example of such almost unavoidable confusion.

"First fathom nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same.
Unerring NATURE, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light;
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show, and without pomp presides.
In some fair body thus the informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole;
Each motion guides, and every nerve sustains,
Itself unseen, but in th'effect remains.
Some, to whom heaven in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'Tis more to guide than spur the muse's steed,
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser, like a generous horse,
Shows most his mettle when you check his course."

Now, lend us your ears. Pray, *attend*.

In these memorable twenty lines—memorable by the truth of the thinking, and the spirited or splendid felicity of expression—the subject of the rules delivered is for two verses—CRITICISM PROPER, that is to say, the faculty of judging in the mind of the critic, who is not necessarily a poet, and whose function in the world is the judgment of the work produced and complete, and exposed for free censure.

"First fathom nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same."

This general reference to the fountain-head of law and of power, is spoken to the critic—the writer of critiques—the public censurer—the man of judgment.

For the next four lines, the creative power, and the presiding criticism in the mind of the poet, and the judicial criticism in the mind of the official critic, are all three in hand together.

"Unerring NATURE, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light;
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art."

Warburton has remarked, that the last two verses run parallel to one another, inasmuch as "source" respects "life," the ever-welling—"end" reflects "force," for the force of anything arises from its being directed to its end—and "test"

looks back to "beauty," for everything acquires beauty by its being reduced to its true standard. Very well said.

But in what sense is nature the "end" of art? Warburton explains the word, by "the design of poetry being to convey knowledge of nature in the most agreeable manner." Might not one think that nature is this "end," rather, inasmuch as art aims at reaching nature in our bosoms? In this acceptation, "end" and "force" would precisely belong to one another.

In the meantime, "life" and "source" distinctly concern the creative power in the soul of the poet; art's "end" must be known, and fixedly looked at, as the lode-star by the mariner, by presiding criticism in the same soul; and the "test" of art must evidently be applied by the critic discharging his peculiar functions; whilst "unerring nature," imaged as the sun, enlightens, of course, both poet and critic.

And now the critic, who was at the outset of the strain—six verses ago—alone in contemplation, is dismissed for good or for ill. The poet is on Pegasus' back; the lashing out of a heel kicks the unfortunate devil to the devil; and away we go.

For one verse, the creative power, and the presiding criticism in the mind of the poet, are confounded together under the freshly suggested name—ART.

"Art from that fund each just supply provides."

That is to say, "Art," as the inventive power in the poet, draws from the sole "fund," nature, its abundant "supplies." Art, as the critical power in the poet, takes care that precisely the "just" supply be drawn.

In the next line, this same art signifies this presiding criticism only.

"Works without show, and without pomp presides."

Clearly, the intent, inostensive, virtuous faculty of criticism alone, influencing, guarding, leading, and ruling.

Then out of the four lines which elaborate an excellent simile, due in propriety to the presiding criticism, two are chequered with a lingering recollection of the creative power—

"In some fair body thus the informing soul
With spirits feeds, and vigour fills the whole;
Each motion guides, and every nerve sustains,
Itself unseen, but in th' effect remains."

What feeds? What fills? You cannot help looking back

to that provision of "supplies," and yet a profounder truth would be disclosed, another brilliancy imparted, and an unperplexed significancy given to the fine image, if Criticism alone might be the informing soul—if the delicate Reason of Art in the accomplished poetical spirit, had been boldly and frankly represented as inspiriting and invigorating, no less than as guiding and supporting; for criticism is the virtue of art, ruling the passions, and surely neither orator, nor poet, nor philosopher, will pause in answering, that virtue "feeds" with "spirits," and "fills with vigour." That which, itself unseen, remains in its effect, is clearly that authorized criticism which genius, in the poet's soul, obeys.

In the next verse wit signifies the creative power alone.

"Some to whom Heaven in wit has been profuse."

In the next wit is the presiding criticism alone.

"Want as much more to turn it to its use."

In the two following, wit is the creative power only, and judgment is the presiding criticism.

"For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife."

The four closing verses, which deservedly ring in every ear, and grace every tongue—lucid and vigorous—born of the true poetical self-understanding—extol duly the presiding criticism, of which only they speak.

"'Tis more to guide than spur the muse's steed,
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser like a generous horse,
Shows most his mettle when you check his course."

A happy commentary on the "feeding with spirits," and "filling with vigour," as we would accept them. The rein provokes into action the plenitude of life that else lies unused.

By the by, Gilbert Wakefield, not the happiest of critics in his services to Pope, here rightly warns against the unskillful and indolent error of apprehending from the word "like" a most inapt simile, which would explain a horse by a horse, and exalt Pegasus by cutting off his wings. The words are clearly to be understood, "like a generous horse—
AS HE IS."

We have seen, then, instructed reader, that the poet begins giving advice to the critic. Then he entangles for a moment

the critic and poet together. Then he discards the critic wholly, and takes the poet along with him to the end. Do not forget, we beseech you, that there are in the soul of the poet two great distinct powers. There is the primary creative power, which, strong in love and passion and imagination, converses with nature, draws thence its heaped intellectual wealth, and transmutes it all into poetical substance. Then there is the great presiding power of criticism, which sits in sovereignty, ruling the work of the poet engaged in exercising his art. These two are confounded and confused by Pope once and again. They are so under the name of *Art!*—which, at first, comprehends the two; and then suddenly means only the power of criticism in the poet. Again, they shift place confusedly under the name "*Wit*"—which at first means the creative power only—then, the critical power only. Then, once more, the creative power only; in which sense it is here at last opposed explicitly to judgment. The close is, under a fit and gallant figure, a spirited description of the creative power fiercely working under the control of criticism.

These deceiving interchanges run through a passage otherwise of great lucidity and beauty, and of sterling strength and worth. Probably, most attentive of readers, though possibly not the least perplexed, thou wilt not rest with less satisfaction upon what is truly good in the passage, now thou hast with us taken the trouble of detecting the slight disorder which overshadows it. The possibility of the first confusion which slips from the critic to the poet, attests the strength of the opinion in Pope's mind, that the poet must entertain as an intellectual inmate a spirit of criticism, as learned and severe as that of the mere critic. Perhaps the latter infers how close the cognation of the creative and the critical faculty.

And now for another striking instance of sliding, unconsciously, from critic to poet.

"But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong;
In the bright muse, though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music, there.
These equal syllables alone require,
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire;
While expletives their feeble aid do join,

And ten low words oft creep in one dull line,
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes;
Where'er you find the 'cooling western breeze,'
In the next line, it 'whispers through the trees';
If crystal streams 'with pleasing murmurs creep,'
The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with 'sleep';
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.
Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes!"—

Who are "**MOST**" that "**JUDGE** a poet's song by numbers?" with whom "**smooth** or rough is **RIGHT** or **WRONG**?" Who are "**the tuneful fools**," who, of the Muse's thousand charms, "**ADMIRE** her tuneful voice" only? The haunters of Parnassus, whose attraction thither is the "**PLEASURE**" of their ear, not the instruction of their mind; who "**REQUIRE**" nothing more than "**equal syllables**?"—For these first eight lines, you have the bad critic, and the bad critic only.

But who are "**THEY**" that "**ring round** the same unvaried chimes" of rhymes; who bestow upon "**you**," "**the reader**,"—"breeze," "trees," "creep," and "sleep;" whose one thought has no meaning; who have scotched the snake, not killed it; and who are to be abandoned to the solitary delight of their own bad verses? In these last ELEVEN lines, you have the bad poet, and the bad poet only. Whilst in the three intermediate verses, "**Though** oft the ear," &c., you have the imperceptible slide effected from critic to poet. Did Pope know and intend this? We think not; and we think there is in the construction itself proof positive to the inadvertency. For where is the antecedent referred to in

"While **THEY** ring round!"

He who looks for it will arrive first at the "**THESE**," who "**equal syllables alone require**." But he has now escaped from the bad poet's into almost worse company. The said "**THESE**" are clearly a SECOND smaller division of the condemned EAR-CRITICS. The greater division, the "**MOST**," *have* ears forsooth, and can distinguish "**smooth**" and "**rough**." But "**THESE**" *WOULD HAVE* ears. They have none; they have only **FINGERS**. They can tell that the syllables keep the **RULE** of the measure, and that is all. They stand on the lowest round of the ladder, or on the ground at the foot of the ladder.

| | | | |
 Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire,

is to them "excellent music," an unimpeachable verse, for it COUNTS RIGHT. They are the arithmeticians of the Muse—no musicians.

We agree with Warburton, who says that it is "impossible to give a full and exact idea of poetical criticism without considering at the same time the *art of poetry*, so far as poetry is an ART." But we must contend, that a poet who addresses or discourses of two such distinct species as the writer who criticizes and the writer who is criticized—two human beings, at least, placed in such very different predicaments—is bound continually to know and to keep his reader aware, which he exhorts and which he smites—the sacrificer or the victim.

You have in your memory, and a thousand times recollected, the following fine passage; but are you sure that you have fully and clearly understood, as well as felt it?

"A *little learning* is a dangerous thing;
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
 There shallow drafts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again.
 Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
 In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,
 While from the bounded level of our mind
 Short views we take, nor see the length behind;
 But more advanced, behold with strange surprise,
 Far distant views of endless science rise!
 So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
 Th' eternal snows appear already past,
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last.
 But those attain'd, we tremble to survey
 The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
 Th' increasing prospect tires our wondering eyes,
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise."

The precept must be given to somebody. To whom? The whole Essay addresses itself to two descriptions of persons—to those who *will be* critics, and to those who *will be* poets. Both are here addressed, and indistinctively. But we may distinguish—nay, must—in turning verse into prose. What is the counsel bestowed? "Meddle not with criticism, as a professed or unprofessed critic, unless you are prepared to invade the depths of criticism." "Touch not the lyre of Apollo to call forth a tone, unless you are willing to put your hand

under the most rigorous discipline in the school of the musicians." What is the motive, the reason of the counsel? The twofold monitory and hortatory counsel, proceeds upon a twofold contemplation; upon the view of the beginning, and upon that of the end.

A taste of criticism—the possession of half a dozen rules—the sitting, for a few furtive and perilous instants, upon that august seat of high judgment, before which the great wits of all ages and nations come to receive their award—infatuates the youthful untempered brain with dazzling, bewildering, and blinding self-opinion. Enough to mislead is easily learned. Right dictates of clearest minds—oracles of the old wisdom—crudely misunderstood. Rules of general enunciation made false in the applying, by the inability of perceiving in the instance the differencing conditions which qualify the rule, or suspend it. So, on the other hand, canons of a narrower scope, stretched beyond their true intent. And last, and worst of all, in the ignorance and in the disdain of statutes, and sanctions, and preceding authoritative judgments—the humours and fancies, the likings and the mislikings, the incapable comprehension and the precipitate misapprehensions of an untrained, uninstructed, inexperienced, self-unknowing spirit, howsoever of Nature gifted or ungifted, to be taken for the standard of the worth which the generations of mankind have approved, or which has newly risen up to enlighten the generations of mankind!

Abstain, then, from judging, O Critic that wilt be! Humble thine understanding in reverence! Open thy soul to beliefs! Yield up thy heart, dissolving and overcome, to love! Cultivate self-suspicion! and learn! learn! learn! The bountiful years that lift up the oak to maturity, shall rear, and strengthen, and ripen thee! Knowledge of books, knowledge of men, knowledge of Nature—and solicited, and roused, and sharpened, in the manifold and studious conversation with books, and with men, and with Nature—last and greatest—the knowledge of thyself—shall bring thee out a large-hearted, high-minded, sensitive, apprehensive, comprehensive, informed and original, clear and profound, genial and exact, scrutinizing and pardoning, candid, and generous, and just—in a word, a finished critic. The steadfast and mighty laws of the moral and intellectual world have taken safe care and tutelage of thee, and confer upon thee, in thy now accomplished powers,

the natural and well-earned remuneration of honestly, laboriously, and pertinaciously dedicated powers !

And as for thee, O Poet that wilt be, con thou, by night and by day, the biography of JOHN MILTON !

And now—in conclusion—for the very noblest strain in didactic poetry.

“Those Rules of old discover’d, not devised,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodised;
Nature, like Liberty, is but restrain’d
By the same laws which first herself ordain’d.

“Hear how learn’d Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights:
High on Parnassus’ top her sons she show’d,
And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
Held from afar, aloft, th’ immortal prize,
And urged the rest by equal steps to rise:
Just precepts thus from great examples given,
She drew from them what they derived from Heaven.
The gen’rous critic fann’d the poet’s fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire.
Then Criticism the Muse’s handmaid proved,
To dress her charms, and make her more beloved.

“You, then, whose judgment the right course would steer,
Know well each Ancient’s proper character:
His fable, subject, scope in ev’ry page;
Religion, country, genius of his age:
Without all these at once before your eyes,
Cavil you may, but never criticise.
Be Homer’s works your study and delight,
Read them by day, and meditate by night;
Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the muses upward to their spring.
Still with itself compared, his text peruse;
And let your comment be the Mantuan muse.

“When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A work t’ outlast immortal Rome design’d,
Perhaps he seem’d above the critic’s law,
And but from Nature’s fountains scorn’d to draw;
But when t’ examine ev’ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.
Convinced, amazed, he checks the bold design;
And rules as strict his labour’d work confine,
As if the Stagyrte o’erlook’d each line.
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
To copy nature is to copy them.

“Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there’s a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles poetry; in each

Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
 And which a master-hand alone can reach.
 If, where the rules not far enough extend,
 (Since rules were made but to promote their end,)
 Some lucky license answer to the full
 Th' intent proposed, the license is a rule.
 Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
 May boldly deviate from the common track;
 Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
 And rise to faults true critics dare not mend.
 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
 Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
 The heart, and all its end at once attains.
 In prospects thus, some objects please our eyes,
 Which out of nature's common order rise,
 The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.
 But though the ancients thus their rules invade,
 (As kings dispense with laws themselves have made,)
 Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
 Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end;
 Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need,
 And have, at least, their precedent to plead.
 The critic else proceeds without remorse,
 Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.

"I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
 Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults.
 Some figures monstrous and mis-shap'd appear,
 Consider'd singly, or beheld too near;
 Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,
 Due distance reconciles to form and grace.
 A prudent chief not always must display
 His powers in equal ranks, and fair array,
 But with the occasion and the place comply,
 Conceal his force, nay, seem sometimes to fly.
 Those oft are stratagems which errors seem;
 Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

"Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
 Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
 Secure from flames, from Envy's fiercer rage,
 Destructive war, and all-involving age.
 See from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!
 Hear, in all tongues consenting pæans ring!
 In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,
 And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind.
 Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
 Immortal heirs of universal praise!
 Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
 As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
 Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
 And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!

O may some spark of your celestial fire,
 The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
 (That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
 Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes,)
 To teach vain wits a science little known,
 T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!"

A magnificent burst of thoughtful enthusiasm! an urgent and monitory exhortation, in which Pope calls upon rising critics and poets to pursue, in the great writings of classical antiquity, the study of that art which proceeds from the true study of nature. It depicts his own studies; and expresses the admiration of a glowing disciple, who, having found his own strength and light in the conversation of his high instructors, will utter his own gratitude, will advance their honour, and will satisfy his zeal for the good of his brethren, by engaging others to use the means that have prospered with himself.

The art delivered by Greece was self-regulated nature. Criticism was the well-expounded Reason of inspiration, calling and instructing emulation. The critic that will be, must transport himself into the mind of antiquity; and, in particular, into the mind of his author for the time being. Homer is your one great, all-sufficient lesson. Read him, after Virgil's manner of reading him, who sought Nature by submitting himself to rules drawn from her, and emblazoned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Nevertheless, the rules do not yet comprehend everything; and emergencies occur when they whom the rules have trained to mastery, inspired by their spirit, and following out their design, transcend them: so creating a new excellence, which, in its turn, becomes a rule—but, O ye moderns! beware, and dare tremblingly!

There are critics of a confined and self-confident wit, who impeach these liberties, even of the masters, most unthinkingly and rashly; for sometimes the skilful tactician is on his way to winning the victory, when you think him flying.

The fame of those ancients is now safe and universal. Withhold not your solitary voice. Hail, ye victorious inheritors of ever-gathering renown! And, oh! enable the last and least of poets to teach the pretenders of criticism modesty and reverence!

DRYDEN.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

SIR Walter Scott's admirable Life of Dryden concludes with this passage:—"I have thus detailed the life, and offered some remarks on the literary character of JOHN DRYDEN; who, educated in a pedantic taste and a fanatical religion, was destined, if not to give laws to the stage of England, at least to defend its liberties; to improve burlesque into satire; to free translation from the fetters of verbal metaphrase, and exclude from it the license of paraphrase; to teach posterity the powerful and varied poetical harmony of which their language was capable; to give an example of the lyric ode of unapproached excellence; and to leave a name SECOND ONLY TO THOSE OF MILTON AND OF SHAKESPEARE." Two names we miss, and muse where the immortal author of Waverley would have placed them; not surely below Dryden's—those of CHAUCER and SPENSER.

Let those four names form a constellation—and the star Dryden, large and bright though it be, must not be looked for in the same region of the heavens. First in the second order of English poets—let glorious John keep the place assigned him by the greatest of Scotsmen. We desire not that he shall vacate the throne. But between the first order and the second, let that be remembered which seems here to have been forgotten, that immeasurable spaces intervene. "Second only to Shakspeare and Milton," implies near approach to them of another greatness inferior but in degree, and Dryden is thus lifted up in our imagination into the sphere of the Creators. On such mention of Milton, let us converse about him for a short half hour, and then venture to descend on Dryden, not with precipitation, but as in a balloon.

To an Englishman recollecting the poetical glories of his country, the Seventeenth Century often appears as the mother

of one great name—**MILTON**. Original and mighty poets express, at its highest, the mind of their time as it is localized on their own soil. With Elizabeth the splendour of the feudal and chivalrous ages for England finally sets. A world expires, and ere long a new world rises. The Wars which signalize the new period, contrast deeply with those which heretofore tore the land. Those were the factions of high lineages. Now, thought seizes the weapons of earthly warfare. The rights vesting in an English subject by the statutes of the country—the rights vesting in man, as the subject of civil government, by the laws of God and nature, are scanned by awakened reason, and put arms into men's hands. The highest of all the interests of the human being—higher than all others, as eternity excels time—Religion—is equally debated. The Protestant church is beleaguered by hostile sects—the Reformation subjected to the demand for a more searching and effective reform. Creed, worship, ecclesiastical discipline and government, all come into debate. A thralldom of opinion—a bondage of authority, that held for many centuries the nation bound together in no powerless union, is, upon the sudden, broken up. Men will know why they obey and why they believe; and human laws and divine truths are searched, as far as the wit of man is capable, to the roots. It is the spirit of the new time that has broken forth, and begins ambitiously, and riotously, to try its powers, but nobly, magnanimously and heroically too. **MILTON** owned and showed himself a son of the time. Gifted with powers eminently fitted for severe investigation—apt for learning, and learned beyond most men—of a temper adverse and rebellious to an assumed and ungrounded control—large-hearted and large-minded to comprehend the diverse interests of men—personally fearless—devout in the highest and boldest sense of the word; namely, as acknowledging no supreme law but from heaven, and as confiding in the immediate communication of divine assistance to the faithful servants of heaven—possessing, moreover, in amplest measure, that peculiar endowment of sovereign poets which enables them to stand up as the teachers of a lofty and tender wisdom, as moral prophets to the species, the clear faculty of profound self-inspection—he was prepared to share in the intellectual strife and change of that day even had some interposing, pacific angel charmed away from the bosom of the land all other warfare and revolution—and to shine in

that age's work, even had the muse never smiled upon his cradled forehead, never laid the magical murmurs of song on his chosen lips. He was a politician, a theologian of his age—amidst the demolition of established things, the clang of arms, and the streaming of blood, whether in the field or upon the scaffold, a thinker and a writer.

There are times that naturally produce real, others that naturally produce imitative poetry. Tranquil, stagnating times produce the imitative; times that rouse in man self-consciousness, produce the real. All great poetry has a moral foundation. It is imagination building upon the great, deep, universal, eternal human will. Therefore profound sympathy with man, and profound intelligence of man, aided by, or growing out of that profound sympathy, are vital to the true poet. But in stagnating times both sympathy with man sleeps, and the disclosure of man sleeps. Troubled times bring out humanity—show its terrible depths—also its might and grandeur—both ways its truth. A great poet seems to require his birth in an age when there are about him great self-revelations of man, for his vaticination. Moreover, his own particular being is more deeply and strongly stirred and shown to him in such a time. But the moral tempest may be too violent for poetry—as the Civil War of the Roses appeared to blast it and all letters—that of the Parliament contrariwise. The intellect of Milton, in the *Paradise Lost*, shows that it had seen "the giant-world enraged."

Happily for the literary fame of his country—for the solid exaltation in these latter ages of the sublime art which he cultivated—for the lovers of poetry who by inheritance or by acquisition speak the masculine and expressive language which he still ennobled—for the serene fame of the august poet himself—the political repose which a new change (the restoration of detruded and exiled royalty to its ancestral throne) spread over the land, by shutting up the public hopes of the civil and ecclesiastical republican in despair, and by crushing his faction in the dust, gave him back, in the visionary blindness of undecaying age, to "the still air of delightful studies," in order that, in seclusion from all "barbarous dissonance," he might achieve the work destined to him from the beginning—not less than the greatest ever achieved by man.

Educated by such a strife to power—and not more sublimely gifted than strenuously exercised—Milton had con-

stantly carried in his soul the twofold consciousness of the highest destination. He knew himself born a great poet: and the names of great poets sounding through all time, rang in his ears. What Homer was to his people and to his language, he would be to his; and this was the lower vocation—glorious as earthly things may be glorious—and self-respecting while he thought of his own head as of one that shall be laurel-bound; yet magnanimous and public-spirited, while he trusted to shed upon his language and upon his country the beams of his own fame. This, we say, was his lower vocation, taken among thoughts and feelings high but merely human. But a higher one accompanied it. The sense of a sanctity native to the human soul, and indestructible—the assiduous hallowing of himself, and of all his powers, by religious offices that seek nothing lower than communion with the fountain-head of all holiness and of all good. And Milton, labouring “in the eye of his great taskmaster”—trained by all recluse and silent studies—trained by the turmoil raging around him of the times, and by his own share in the general contention—according to the self-dedication of his mind trained within the temple—he, stricken with darkness and amidst the gloom of extinguished earthly hopes, assumed the singing robes of the poet.

The purpose of the *Paradise Lost* is wholly religious. He strikes the loudest, and at the same time, the sweetest-toned harp of the Muse with the hand of a Christian theologian. He girds up all the highest powers of the human mind to wrestling with the most arduous question with which the human faculties can engage—the all-involving question—How is the world governed? Do we live under chance, or fate, or Providence? Is there a God? And is he holy, loving, wise, and just? He will

“Assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.”

The justifying answer he reads in the Scriptures. Man fell, tempted from without by another, but by the act of his own free-will, and by his own choice. Thus, according to the theology of Milton, is the divine Rule of the universe completely justified in the sin into which man has fallen—in the punishment which has fallen upon man. The Justice of God is cleared. And his Love? That shines out, when man has perversely fallen, by the Covenant of Mercy, by

finding out for him a Redeemer. And thus the two events in the history of mankind, which the Scriptures present as infinitely surpassing all others in importance, which are cardinal to the destinies of the human race, upon which all our wo, and, in the highest sense, all our weal are hung, become the subject of the work—the Fall of man—consolid by the promise and undertaking of his Redemption.

The narrative of the Fall, delivered with an awful and a pathetic simplicity to us in a few words in the first chapter of Genesis, becomes accordingly the groundwork of the Poem; and these few words, with a few more scattered through the Scriptures, and barely hinting Celestial transactions, the War and Fall of the Angels, are by a genius, as daringly as powerfully creative, expanded into the mighty dimensions of an Epic. That unspeakable hope, foreshown to Adam as to be accomplished in distant generations, pouring an exhilarating beam upon the darkness of man's self-wrought destruction, which saves the catastrophe of the poem from utter despair, and which tranquilizes the sadness, has to be interwoven in the poet's narrative of the Fall. How stupendous the art that has disposed and ordered the immensity!—comprehended the complexity of the subject into a clearly harmonized, musically proportionate whole!

Unless the *Paradise Lost* had risen from the soul of Milton as a hymn—unless he had begun to sing as a worshiper with his hands uplifted before the altar of incense, the choice of the subject would have been more than bold—it would have been the daring of presumption—an act of impiety. For he will put in dialogue God the Father and God the Son—disclosing their supreme counsels. He has prayed to the Third Person of the Godhead for light and succour. If this were a fetch of human wit, it was in the austere zealot and puritan a mockery. To a devout Roman Catholic poet, we could forgive everything. For nursed among legends and visual representations of the invisible—panoplied in a childlike imposed faith from the access of impiety—his paternoster and his ave-Marie more familiar to his lips than his bread, almost so as their breath—the most audacious representations may come to him vividly and naturally, without a scruple and without a thought. But Milton, the purged, the chastened, a spiritual iconoclast, drinking his faith by his own thirst from the waters of Zion, a champion whose weapons from the armory of God “are given him tempered”—he to holy things cannot lay

other than an awful hand. We know that he believed himself under a peculiar guidance. Surely, he had had visions of glory which, when he designed the poem that would include scenes in heaven, offered themselves again almost like very revelations. If we hesitate in believing this of him it is because we conceive in him a stern intellectual pride and strength, which could not easily kneel to adore. But there we should greatly err. For he recognized in himself—

“Self-knowing, and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with heaven”—

that capacity of song which nothing but sacred Epos could satisfy. Diodati asks him—“*Quid studes?*” and he answers—“*Mehercle, immortalitatem.*” This might persuade us that he finally chose the Fall of Man as he at first had chosen King Arthur. But not so. When Arthur dropped away from his purposes, naturally displaced by the after-choice, the will toward an Epic underwent an answerable revolution. The first subject was called by the “longing after immortality.” But another longing, or the longing after another immortality, carried the will and the man to the second. The learning and the learned art of the *Paradise Lost*, concur in inclining us to look upon Milton as an artist rather than a worshiper. On closer consideration of its spirit, we cannot think of his putting his hand to such a work without the inwardly felt conviction that *God was with him in it*.

And, what is the feeling with which a youthful mind first regards the *Paradise Lost*? A holy awe—something as if it were a second Bible. So, too, have felt towards it our great poets. Elwood, the Quaker, has told us, but we cannot believe him, that he suggested to Milton the *Paradise Regained*! Hardly credible that, being the natural sequel and complement of the *Paradise Lost*, it should not have occurred to Milton. Pray, did the Quaker suggest the treatment? To conceive that man was virtually redeemed when Jesus had avouched, by proof, his perfect obedience, was a view, we think, proper to spring in a religious mind. It is remarkable, however, certainly, that the Atoning Sacrifice, which in the *Paradise Lost* is brought into the front of the Divine rule and of the poem, in the *Paradise Regained* hardly appears—if at all. In the both you see the holy awe with which Milton shuns describing the scenes of the Passion. Between Adam and Michael, on that “top of speculation” the Visions

end at the Deluge. The Crucifixion falls amongst the recorded events, and is told with few and sparing words. You *must* think that the removal of the dread Crucifixion from the action of the *Paradise Regained* recommended that action to the poet—contradicting Warburton, who blames him, as a poet, for not having chosen the more stupendous action. Milton thus obtained further a perfect Greek simplicity of plan. The Crucifixion has always seemed profaned when any modern poet has dared to describe it.

The *Samson Agonistes* was, you know, Milton's last work. How suitable, above all other subjects, to the Hebrew soul within him! Their common blindness—the simplicity of character that is proper to a strong man—"the plain heroic magnitude of mind"—the absolute dependence on God, that is to say, trustful dependence brought out by blindness—the submission under the visiting hand of heaven provoked by Samson's own disobedience—God's especial selection of him *as his own*, a dedicated Nazarite—his call to be a national deliverer—all these combined to affect his devout imagination; while one might almost think, that in the youthful Milton the same fancy had delighted in the prowess and exploits of Samson which rejoiced in the heroes of chivalrous fable.

What are Dryden's works to these? How shall we compare Poet with Poet—Man with Man?

Let us then turn to the other clauses in Sir Walter's eulogium, and we shall be able to go along with him in much—not all—of what he affirms of his darling Dryden. He was verily a GREAT TRANSLATOR. But before speaking of his performances, or of his principles, in that Fine Art, Translation, let us say a few words on its range and power.

It is indeed most desirable to have the gift of tongues, though the "myriad-minded" man had but that of his own. There are people who can parley all the European languages, even like so many natives, and read you off-hand any strange-looking page, be it even MS., you can submit to their eyes. Yet, we believe, they always most feelingly understand the "old familiar faces" of the words they got by heart in lisping them, and that became a part of their being, not by process of study, but by that seeming inspiration, through which childhood is ever joyfully acquiring multifarious lore in the spirit of love. In waking and sleeping dreams we speak our mother tongue. In it we make love—in it we say our

prayers. Had he lived till he was fourscore, John Leyden, in the dotage of genius, would have maundered by the banks of the Ganges in the Doric that charmed his ears among the murmurs of the Teviot. Heaven bless the man who invented Translation! Heaven bless Translators all—especially those who give us in English all thoughts, rich and rare, that took life in foreign attire, and continue to charm human hearts, and souls, and minds, in a change of light that shows them sometimes even more beautiful than when first they had a place among airy creatures!

But methinks we hear some wiseacre, who is no wizard, exclaim:—"Oh! to be enjoyed, it must be read in the original!" What! the Bible? You have no Hebrew, and little Greek, but surely you sometimes dip into the Old and into the New Testament.

To treat the question more argumentatively, let Prose Composition be divided into History, Philosophy, Oratory. In History, Translation—say into English—is easiest, and in all cases practicable. The information transferred is the chief thing asked, even if Style be lost—with some writers a small, with others no doubt a considerable, with a few a great loss. But the facts, that is, the events, and all the characters too, can be turned over, although one finer historical fact—the spirit of the country and time, as breathing in the very Style of the artist, may, yet need not, evaporate. The Translator, however, should be himself an historian or antiquary, and should confine himself—as, indeed, if left to himself he will do—to the nation in whose fate he happens to have had awakened in him—by influences hard to tell, and perhaps to himself unknown—the perpetual interest of a sympathy that endears to him, above all others, that especial region, and the ages that, like shadows, have passed over it.

In Philosophy, the Translator's task is harder, and it is higher; but its accomplishment is open to the zealous lover of truth. The whole philosophy must be thoroughly possessed by him, or meanings will be lost from, or imposed on, the author—cases fatal both. Besides, of all writers, a philosopher most collects extensive and penetrating theories into chosen words. No dictionary—the soul only of the philosopher interprets these words. In the new language, you must have great power and mastery to seize equivalents if there; if not, to create them, or to extricate your-

self with circumlocutions that do not bewilder or mislead—precise and exquisite. Have we, in our language, many any such Translations? Not Taylor's or Sydenham's Plato—not Gillies' Aristotle. Coleridge is dead—but De Quincey is alive.

In Oratory, the Style is all in all. It is the *ipsissimus homo*. He who "wielded at will that fierce democratic," does not appear unless the thunder growl and the lightning dazzle. From what hand shall it fulmine over England as over Greece? Yet the matter, the facts, the order, the logic, are all easily enough to be transferred—not the passion and the splendour, except by an orator, and even hardly by him; but Brougham has grappled manfully with Demosthenes, though he hath somewhat diminished the power of the Crown.

But in Poetry. Ay, there the difficulties grow—there all are collected—and one equal to all, or nearly so, is added—VERSE! Of all writers, the poet is the most exquisite in his words. His creations revolve in them—live in them—breathe and burn. Shakspeare expresses this—"the poet's *pen* turns them to shape." Ariel, and Lear, and Hamlet, are not except in the very words—their very own words. For the poet, of all men, feels most susceptibly, sensitively, perceptively, acutely, accurately, clearly, tenderly, kindly—the contact of his mind with yours; and the words are the *medium of contact*! Yet, most of the *ILIAD* may be transferred—for it is a history. The manners are easily depicted in a Translation—so is the wonderful thinking that remains to us therein from that remote lost world—and makes the substratum of the poem. In short, that old world which Homer preserves, can be shown in a Translation, but *not Homer himself*. The simplicity, and sweetness, and majesty, and the musical soul and art, require Greek, and old Greek. A translation into Attic Greek, by Sophocles, would not be Homer. Into modern English? Alas, and alack-a-day! An English Translator might better undertake Euripides than Sophocles, and Sophocles than Æschylus. Æschylus, Pindar, Homer—these are the three terrors of Translation. Why? They are doubly so remote! Distant so far, and distant so high! We should not, ourselves, much care for undertaking Apollonius Rhodius, and Callimachus, although the Alexandrian schoolmaster abounds in the poetical riches of the Greek tongue, and the Cyrenaic hymnist has an un-

attainable spirit of grace and elastic step. Yet we could, with a safe conscience, try ; because if less glory be attempted by the translator, less can be lost for his original. Whereas, if we let down Homer, Pindar, Æschylus, we are lowering the heights of the human spirit—*crimen læsæ majestatis*. In poetry the absolutely creative power of the human spirit—that immense endowment and privilege of the human being—is at its height. Many view this endowment and privilege with skepticism—renouncing their own glory—denying themselves. Therefore, it is always important, in civilized times, that the majesty and might of poetry be sustained—surrounded by a body-guard of opinion. In rude times it can take good care of itself. Then the king walks among the people safe in their faith and love. Now you tremble to diminish the reverence of that creation. But courage! All cannot read Greek; and they are, as fellow men of Homer, entitled to as much of him as they can get. Chapman, Pope, Cowper, Sotheby, all taken together, impress an Englishman (Scotsman included), who is no Grecian, with a belief in greatness. And then for the perpetual feeling of his faith, he has his own Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton.

Translation, you see, then, O gracious perusers! has divers motives. One is ambitious. It is to help in giving the poet his due fame, and that is a motive honourably sprung, since it comes of the belief that the poet belongs to the species at large ; and that accordingly his praise has not had its full reverberation, until it has rebounded from all hearts. Of the same impulse, but dealing justice in another direction, is the wish that the less learned shall not, from that accident, forfeit their share of the common patrimony ; and that surely is among the best of all reasons. A peculiar sort of zeal is to cultivate the vernacular literature by transplanting the great works of other more happily cultivated languages, as we naturalize fair and useful exotics. This is an early thought, and goes off as the country advances. Probably the different reasons of Translation would affect, even materially, the characters of Translation ; or at least, if they co-exist, the predominance of one over the other moving causes. The different purposes will even give different orders of Translators. To undertake to aid in diffusing the version of Homer to the ends of the West, would ask an Englishman tolerably confident in his own powers. It breathed in the fiery spirit of George Chapman, who, having

rolled out the Iliad in our stateliest numbers, the Odyssey in more moderate strain, and finally dispatched the Homeric *Minora*, begins his own Epilogue of three consecutive labours, with

"The work that I WAS BORN TO DO IS DONE!"

A little reflection will suggest to many a wishing Translator, that HE is in danger of rather doing injustice to the celebrity of an admired original. Incapables! refrain, desist, be dumb.

The use of Translations to the literature that has received them has been questioned. The native genius and energies of a country may, it has been feared, be oppressed by the importation of wealth and luxuries. The Hygeian maxim to remain poor for the sake of health and strength, is hard to act upon. In another sense, we might rather look upon the introduced strangers as dangerous rivals, who rouse us to woo with better devotion, and so are useful. Besides, it looks like a timid policy to refuse to know what our fellows have done. Milton was not subdued, but inflamed, by conversing with *all* the great originals. Burns did not the less Dorically tune his reed, because Pope had sounded in his ear echoes of the Scamandrian trumpet-blast. The truer and more encouraging doctrine rather seems to be, that if the land has in its mould the right nurture of genius, genius will strike its roots, and lift its flowers. In the meantime, it is to be considered, against such a policy of jealous protection, that *not* the influence on the vernacular literature is the first legitimate claim, but the gain of enlightenment for the human mind, intent upon enlarging itself by bringing under ken *everywhere* that which itself has been, and that which itself has done *everywhere*.

The great distinction which we have observed in these remarks on Translation, between compositions in Prose and Verse, seems here to demand from us some remarks. A question of the very highest importance in literature arises—can the Fictitious which the poet relates in Verse be as well related in Prose? The voice of all ages, countries, languages, answers—no! The literature of every civilized nation presents this phenomenon—a division, broad and deep, running through it, and marked by that distinction in the masical structure of discourse, which we habitually designate by the names, Prose, and Verse. The distinction, as we all know,

is as decided in the substance itself of the composition, as it is in the musical putting together of the words. Homer, Pindar, Alcæus, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, or Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, upon the one side; and upon the other, Herodotus and Thucydides, Demosthenes, Plato, and the Stagyræite—or under another still fortunate sky, Livy, Cæsar, Tacitus, Cicero and Seneca—here bare names of the poets on the one side, of the writers of prose on the other, express alike to our soberest judgment, and to our most awakened enthusiasm, nothing less than two distinct *Worlds of Thinking*.

How so commanding, so permeating, so vivifying, and so transfusing a power should reside in a fact of human speech, seemingly so slight and slender as that ruled and mechanical adjustment of a few syllables which we call a verse, is perhaps not explicable by our philosophy; but of the power itself, the uniform history of mankind leaves us no liberty to doubt. Yet may we understand something of this wonderful agency; and conceive how the new and strange wealth of music brought out from words, of which the speaker in verse finds himself the privileged master, may lift up, as on wings, his courage to think and utter. We may suppose that the sweet and melting, or the solemn, the prolonged, the proud swell, or flow, or fall of his own numbers, may surprise his own ear, and seize his own soul with unexpected emotions; and that off his guard and unawares, and, as grave ancient writers have said in a sort of sacred madness, he may be hurried into inventions of greatness, of wonder, and beauty, which would have remained for ever locked up and forbidden to the colder and more reserved temper, which seems fittingly to accompany prose, the accustomed language of Reason. Versification is Measure, and it is Harmony. If you hear the measure you listen expectantly, and there is a recurring pleasure in the fulfilment of that expectation. But the pleasure thus afforded would soon be exhausted, did not the power of Harmony tell. That is a musical pleasure which cannot be exhausted. Here, then, is a reason why the natural music of speech shall be elaborated to its height in verse. You assume that the mind of the orator, the historian, the philosopher, is given up wholly to the truth of his matter. Therefore in him the palpable study of harmonious periods (as in Isocrates) impairs your confidence in his earnestness and sincerity. Not so, we venture to say, in the case of the poet.

In his composition the very law of the verse installs the sound in a sort of mysterious sovereignty over the sense. He hurries or he protracts—he swells notes as of an organ, he attenuates them as of a flute. He seeks in the sound of words their power—and their power is great—to paint notions and things—to imitate the twanging of a bow, the hissing of an arrow, the roaring of the winds, the weltering of the waves. His verse laughs with merriment, and wails with sorrow; and that, which would in a grave writer of prose be frivolous, be sonorous trifles, crowns his muse with praise. Consequences follow, deeply penetrating into the substance of the whole composition, which is thus delivered up, in a manner unknown to prose, to the wonder-working power of a delighted inspiration.

We know if any one begins to recite a passage of Milton, that we expect to hear a charm of sound which we never for a moment dream of hearing in prose—a new and a more beautiful speech. For having made one mode of speech more musical than another, we have placed it more immediately under the dominion of the faculty by which we are cognizant of beauty. Accordingly we feel, and know, and universally admit, although Eloquence is musical, that Poetry far excels Eloquence in its alliance with the beautiful. Music is beauty, addressing itself to the sense of hearing, and therefore the beautiful is showered upon poetry, and therein everlastingly enshrined. Verse, then, is a language seized upon by the soul gratifying itself in the indulgence of its own emotions, under a law of beauty. Thus we have seen a power introduced into human discourse, by a cause that hardly promised such wonderful effects. A modulation of sounds, a musical rising, and falling, and flowing, fitted for expressing a fervour, a boldness, an enthusiasm in the thinking suddenly transforms the whole character of composition, creates or infuses a new spirit of thought. A kind of literature is produced, of a peculiar, and that the highest order—Poetry. We have seen this take many beautiful, august, and imposing forms—the majesty of the Epopeia—the pathetic energy of the Tragic Drama—the rapturous exaltation and prodigal splendour of the Lyrical Ode. The names of the species recall the names of the great works belonging to each, and of the great masters whose memory the works have made immortal. Those masters of the divine art thus breathing delight, are numbered among the loftiest and most powerful

spirits. Nations, illustrious in peace and war, heroic in character and action, founders of stable and flourishing republics and empires, have set on the front of their renown the fame of having produced this or that other glorious poem. What wonder, since the poet, in forms given by imagination, embodies the profoundest, the loftiest, the tenderest, the innermost acts and movements of that soul which lives in every human bosom? What wonder if each of us loves the poet, when in his work, as in a celestial mirror, each of us beholds *himself* naturally and truly pictured, and yet ennobled? What wonder if the nation, proud of itself, of its position, and of its memories, exalts its own darling son of song, who may have fixed, in a precious throng of imperishable words, the peculiar spirit of thinking, of loving, of daring, which has made the nation what it has been, is, and hopes long to be? What wonder if humankind, when mighty ages have departed, and languages once cultivated in their beauty, have ceased from being spoken, should bring across lands and seas crowns of undying laurels to cast at the feet of some awful poet who cannot die? In whose true, capacious, and prophetic mind, the coming civilization of his own people was long beforehand anticipated and predisposed? And in whose antique verse we, the offspring of other ages, and tongues, and races, drink still the freshly-flowing and ever-living waters of original and unexhausted humanity?

Oh! how shall such strains as these, in which each single word and syllable has in itself a spell, more potent by its position, survive, in undiminished force and beauty, the art that would fain spirit them away out of one language, which they have breathed all life long, into another which they have to learn to love? Lived there ever such a magician? Never.

There is reason for sadness in the above little paragraph. But after due rumination, let us forget it, and proceed. Hear Dryden prosing away upon paraphrase, and metaphrase, and imitation, in his very best style.

"All translation, I suppose, may be reduced to these three heads—First, that of metaphrase, or turning an author, word by word, and line by line, from one language into another. Thus, or near this manner, was Horace his *Art of Poetry* translated by Ben Jonson. The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that, too, is ad-

mitted to be amplified, but not altered. Such is Mr. Waller's translation of Virgil's fourth *Æneid*. The third way is that of imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion, and taking only some general hints from the original, to run divisions on the ground-work as he pleases. Such is Mr. Cowley's practice in turning two odes of Pindar, and one of Horace into English.

"Concerning the first of these methods, our master, Horace, has given us this caution—

'Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus
Interpres'——

'Nor word for word too faithfully translate,'

as the Earl of Roscommon has excellently rendered it. 'Too faithfully is, indeed, pedantically.' It is a faith like that which proceeds from superstition, blind and zealous. Take it in the expression of Sir John Denham to Sir Richard Fanshawe, on his version of the *Pastor Fido*—

'That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
Of tracing word by word, and line by line:
A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
To make translations, and translators too;
They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,
True to his sense, but truer to his fame.'

"It is almost impossible to translate verbally, and well, at the same time; for the Latin (a most severe and compendious language) often expresses that in one word, which either the barbarity or the narrowness of modern tongues cannot supply in more. It is frequent, also, that the conceit is couched in some expression which will be lost in English—

'Atque iidem venti vela fidemque ferent.'

What poet of our nation is so happy as to express this thought literally in English, and to strike wit, or almost sense, out of it?

"In short, the verbal copier is encumbered with so many difficulties at once, that he can never disentangle himself from them all. He is to consider, at the same time, the thought of his author, and his words, and to find out the counterpart to each in another language; and besides this, he is to confine himself to the compass of numbers, and the slavery of rhyme. It is much like dancing on ropes with

fettered legs ; a man may shun a fall by using caution, but the gracefulness of motion is not to be expected ; and when we have said the best of it, it is but a foolish task, for no sober man would put himself into a danger for the applause of escaping without breaking his neck. We see Ben Jonson could not avoid obscurity in his literal translation of Horace, attempted in the same compass of line ; nay, Horace himself could scarce have done it to a Greek poet,

‘Brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio.’

either perspicuity or gracefulness will frequently be wanting. Horace has, indeed, avoided both these rocks in his translation of the three first lines of Homer’s *Odyssey*, which he has contracted into two:—

‘Dic mihi, musa, virum, captæ post tempora Trojæ
Qui mores hominum multorum vidit, et urbes.

‘Muse, speak the man, who, since the siege of Troy,
So many towns, such change of manners saw.’

But then the sufferings of Ulysses, which are a considerable part of that sentence, are omitted—

“Ος μάλα πολλά
πλάγχθη.

The consideration of these difficulties, in a servile, literal translation, not long since made two of our famous wits, Sir John Denham and Mr. Cowley, to contrive another way of turning authors into our tongue, called by the latter of them, imitation. As they were friends, I suppose they communicated their thoughts on this subject to each other; and, therefore, their reasons for it are little different, though the practice of one is much more moderate. I take imitation of an author, in their sense, to be an endeavour of a later poet to write like one who has written before him on the same subject; that is, not to translate his words, or to be confined to his sense, but only to set him as a pattern, and to write as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age and in our country. Yet I dare not say that either of them have carried this libertine way of rendering authors (as Mr. Cowley calls it) so far as my definition reaches; for, in the Pindaric Odes, the customs and ceremonies of ancient Greece are still preserved. But I know not what mischief may arise hereafter from the example of such an innovation, when writers of unequal parts to him shall imitate so bold an

undertaking. To add and to diminish what we please, in the way avowed by him, ought only to be granted to Mr. Cowley, and that, too, only in his translation of Pindar; because he alone was able to make him amends, by giving him better of his own, whenever he refused his author's thoughts. Pindar is generally known to be a dark writer, to want connection, (I mean as to our understanding,) to soar out of sight, and to leave his reader at a gaze. So wild and ungovernable a poet cannot be translated literally; his genius is too strong to bear a chain, and, Samson-like, he shakes it off. A genius so elevated and unconfined as Mr. Cowley's was but necessary to make Pindar speak English, and that was to be performed by no other way than imitation. But if Virgil, or Ovid, or any regular intelligible authors, be thus used, it is no longer to be called their work, when neither the thoughts nor words are drawn from the original; but instead of them there is something new produced, which is almost the creation of another hand. By this way, it is true, somewhat that is excellent may be invented, perhaps more excellent than the first design; though Virgil must be still excepted, when that perhaps takes place. Yet he who is inquisitive to know an author's thoughts, will be disappointed in his expectation; and it is not always that a man will be contented to have a present made him when he expects the payment of a debt. To state it fairly: imitation of an author is the most advantageous way for a translator to show himself, but the greatest wrong which can be done to the memory and reputation of the dead. Sir John Denham (who advised more liberty than he took himself) gives his reason for his innovation in his admirable preface before the translation of the second *Æneid*. 'Poetry is of so subtle a spirit, that in pouring out of one language into another, it will all evaporate; and, if a new spirit be not added in the *transfusion*, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*.' I confess this argument holds good against a literal translation; but who defends it? Imitation and verbal version are, in my opinion, the two extremes which ought to be avoided; and therefore, when I have proposed the mean betwixt them, it will be seen how far this argument will reach.

"No man is capable of translating poetry, who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of his author's language and of his own: nor must we understand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts

and expression, which are the characters that distinguish, and, as it were, individuate him from all other writers. When we are come thus far it is time to look into ourselves, to conform our genius to his, to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance. The like care must be taken of the more outward ornaments—the words. When they appear (which is but seldom) literally graceful, it were an injury to the author that they should be changed. But, since every language is so full of its own proprieties, that what is beautiful in one is often barbarous, nay, sometimes nonsense, in another, it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words; it is enough if he choose out some expression which does not vitiate the sense. I suppose he may stretch his chain to such a latitude; but, by innovation of thoughts, methinks he breaks it. By this means the spirit of an author may be transfused, and yet not lost; and thus it is plain that the reason alleged by Sir John Denham has no further force than the expression; for thought, if it be translated truly, cannot be lost in another language; but the words that convey it to our apprehension (which are the image and ornament of that thought) may be so ill chosen, as to make it appear in an unhandsome dress, and rob it of its native lustre. There is, therefore, a liberty to be allowed for the expression; neither is it necessary that words and lines should be confined to the measure of the original. The sense of an author, generally speaking, is to be sacred and inviolable. If the fancy of Ovid be luxuriant it is his character to be so; and if I retrench it he is no longer Ovid. It will be replied that he receives advantage by this lopping of his superfluous branches, but I rejoin that a translator has no such right. When a painter copies from the life, I suppose he has no privilege to alter features and lineaments, under pretence that his picture will look better: perhaps the face which he has drawn would be more exact if the eyes and nose were altered; but it is his business to make it resemble the original. In two cases only there may a seeming difficulty arise; that is, if the thought be notoriously trivial or dishonest; but the same answer will serve for both, that then they ought not to be translated—

‘Et qua

Desperes tractata nescere posse, relinquo.’

"Thus I have ventured to give my opinion on this subject against the authority of two great men, but I hope, without offence to either of their memories; for I both loved them living, and reverence them now they are dead. But if, after what I have urged, it be thought by better judges that the praise of a translation consists in adding new beauties to the piece, thereby to recompense the loss which it sustains by change of language, I shall be willing to be taught better, and recant. In the meantime, it seems to me that the true reason why we have so few versions which are tolerable, is not from the too close pursuing of the author's sense, but because that there are so few who have all the talents which are requisite for translation, and that there is so little praise, and so small encouragement, for so considerable a part of learning."

We could write a useful commentary on each paragraph of that lively dissertation. The positions laid down are not, in all their extent, tenable; and Dryden himself, in other places, advocates principles of Translation altogether different from these, and violates them in his practice by a thousand beauties as well as faults. We confine ourselves to one or two remarks.

Dryden, in assigning the qualifications of a poetical Translator, seems to speak with due caution.—"He must have a genius to the art." How much, then, of the powers are asked in him which go to making the original poet? Not the great creative genius. In order effectively to translating the Song of Achilles, he need not have been able to invent the character of Achilles, or to delineate it, if he found it, as Homer might largely, invented in tradition to his hands. But he must be the adequate critic of the Song full and whole. He must feel the Achilles whom Homer has given him, through chilling blood, and thrilling nerve, and almost through shivering, shuddering bone. Neither need he be, in verse and word possibly, the creator for thoughts of his own. That Homer is. He is not called upon to be, in his own strength, an audacious, impetuous, majestic, and magnanimous thinker. It is enough if he have the sensibility, the simplicity, the sincerity, the sympathy, and the intellectual capacity, to become all this on the strength of another. But if he could not create the thoughts, neither could he, upon his own behalf, create the verbal and metrical expression of the thoughts; for in these last is the inspiration that brings into

the light of existence both words and music. Yet nothing seems to hinder, but that if endowed for perfectly accepting and appropriating the thoughts, he may then become in secondary place inspired, and a creator for the "new utterance." In all our observation of the various constitutions bestowed, in different men, upon the common human mind, nothing appears to forbid that an exquisite and mastering faculty of language, such as shall place the wealth of a mother-tongue at command, and an exquisite ear and talent for melodious and significant numbers, may be lodged in a spirit that is not gifted with original invention. Much rather, the recognition of the compensating and separable way in which faculties are dealt, would lead us to look from time to time, for children of the Muse gifted for supereminent Translators. Do we not see engravers, not themselves exalted and accomplished masters, who yet absorb into their transcript the soul of the master? Dryden's phrase, "*have a genius*," seems to express this qualified gifting—the enthusiasm, and the narrower creative faculty excellently given, and kept alive and active by cultivation and exercise.

Hoole's *Orlando Furioso*, and *Jerusalem Delivered*, are among the world's duller achievements in the art of Translation. They have obtained some favour of public opinion by the interest which will break through them, and which they in their unambitious way singularly attest—the interest of the matter. What is the native deficiency which extinguishes in them every glimmer of the original Style? The clerk at the India-House or some other house, had not, in the moulding of heart or brain, any touch of the romantic. And Ariosto and Tasso are the two poets of Romance. Take a translator of no higher intellectual endowment than Mr. Hoole—perform some unknown adjuration to the goddess Nature, which shall move her to infuse into him the species of sensibility which grounds the two poems, and which we have said that we desiderate in the bold accountant,—read the poems through with him, taking care that he understands them—as far as a matter of the sort may be seen to, teach him, which is all fair, a trick or two of our English verse to relieve the terrible couplet monotony—run an eye over the MS. on his way to the printer, and he shall have enriched the literature of his country with, if not two rightly representative, yet two justifiable Translations.

Dryden's defence of the manner in which Pindar has been

made to speak English by Cowley, cannot be sustained. A translator must give the meaning of his author so as that they, who are scholars in the vernacular only—for to the unread and uncultivated he does not address himself—may be as nearly as possible so impressed and affected as scholars in the original tongue are by the author; or, soaring a little more ambitiously, as nearly as may be as they were affected to whom the original work was native. To Anglicise Pindar is not the adventure. It is to Hellenize an English reader. Homer is not dyed in Grecism as Pindar is. The profound, universal, overpowering humanity of Homer makes him of the soil everywhere. The boundaries of nations, and of races, fade out and vanish. He and we are of the family—of the brotherhood—Man. That is all that we feel and know. The manners are a little gone by. That is all the difference. We read an ancestral chronicle, rather than the diary of to-day. But Pindar is all Greek—Greek to the backbone. There the stately and splendid mythology stands in its own power—not allied to us by infused human blood—but estranged from us in a dazzling, divine glory. The great theological poet of Greece, the hymnist of her deities, remembers, in celebrating athlete and charioteer, his grave and superior function. To hear Pindar in English, you must open your wings, and away to the field of Elis, or the Isthmian strand. Under the canopied smoke of London or Edinburgh, even amongst the beautiful fields of England or Scotland, there is nothing to be made of him. You must be a Greek among Greeks.

Therefore, in the Translator, no condescension to our ignorance at least. And no ignoble dread of our ignorant prejudices. The difficult connection of the thoughts which Dryden duly allows to the foreign and ancient poet, a commentary might clear, where it does as much for the reader of the Greek; or sometimes, possibly, a word interpolated might help. But the difficulty of translating Pindar is quite distinct from his obscurity. For it is his light. It is the super-terrestrial splendour of the lyrical phraseology which satisfied the Greek imagination, lifted into transport by the ardour, joy, and triumph, of those Panhellenic Games. It is the simple, yet dignified strength of the short, pithy, sage Sentences. It is the rendering of the now bold and abrupt, now enchaind sequences of expressive sound, in those measures which we hardly yet know how to scan. It is not the

track but the wing of the Theban eagle that is the desperation.

It is always delightful to hear Dryden speaking of Cowley. He was indeed a man made to be loved. But to students in the divine art, his poetry will forever remain the great puzzle. His "Pindaric Odes, written in imitation of the style and manner of the Odes of Pindar," are unique. Cowley was a scholar. In Latin verse he is one of the greatest among the modern masters; and he had much Greek. There can be no doubt that he could construe Pindar—none that he could have understood him—had he tried to do so. "If a man should undertake to translate Pindar word for word, it would be thought that one madman had translated another." Instead, therefore, of translating him word for word, "the ingenious Cowley" set about imitating his style and manner, and that he thought might best be effected by changing his measures, and discarding almost all his words, except the proper names, to which he added many others of person or place, illustrious at the time, or in tradition. Events and exploits, brought vividly back by Pindar to the memory of listeners, to whom a word sufficed, are descanted on by Cowley in explanatory strains, often unintelligible to all living men. The two opening lines of his first Imitation characterize his muse.

"Queen of all harmonious things,
Dancing words, and speaking things."

The words do dance indeed; and "Cowley's Medley" combines the Polka and the Gallopade.

Yet throughout these Two Odes (the Second Olympic and the First Nemæan) may be detected flowing the poetry of Pindar. Compare Cowley with him—book in hand—and ever and anon you behold Pindar. Cowley all along had him in his mind—but Cowley's mind played him queer tricks—his heart never; yet had he a soul capable of taking flight with the Theban eagle. There are many fine lines, sentimental and descriptive, in these extraordinary performances. There is sometimes "a golden ferment" on the page, which, for the moment, pleases more than the cold correctness of Carey. For example—THE ISLE OF THE BLEST.

"Far other lot befalls the good;
A life from trouble free;
Nor with laborious hands
To vex the stubborn lands,

Nor beat the billowy sea
 For a scanty livelihood.
 But with the honour'd of the gods,
 Who love the faithful, their abodes;
 By day or night the sun quits not their sphere,
 Living a dateless age without a tear.
 The others urge meanwhile,
 Loathsome to light their endless toil.
 But whoso thrice on either side
 With firm endurance have been tried,
 Keeping the soul exempted still
 Through every change from taint of ill,
 To the tower of Saturn they
 Travel Jove's eternal way.
 On that blest Isle's enchanted ground,
 Airs from ocean breathe around;
 Burn the bright immortal flowers,
 Some on beds, and some on bowers,
 From the branches hanging high;
 Some fed by waters where they lie;
 Of whose blossoms these do braid
 Armlets, and crowns their brows to shade.
 Such bliss is their's, assured by just decree
 Of Rhadamanth, who doth the judgment share
 With father Saturn, spouse of Rhea, she
 Who hath o'er all in heav'n the highest chair.
 With them are Peleus, Cadmus number'd,
 And he, whom as in trance he slumber'd,
 His mother Thetis wafted there,
 Softening the heart of Jove with prayer,
 Her own Achilles, that o'erthrew
 Hector, gigantic column of old Troy,
 And valiant Cycnus slew,
 And Morning's Æthiop boy."

CAREY.

"Whilst in the lands of unexhausted light
 O'er which the godlike sun's unwearied light,
 Ne'er winks in clouds, nor sleeps in night,
 An endless spring of age the good enjoy,
 Where neither want does pinch, nor plenty cloy.
 There neither earth nor sea they plow,
 Nor ought to labour owe
 For food, that whilst it nourishes does decay,
 And in the lamp of life consumes away.
 Thrice had these men through mortal bodies past,
 Did thrice the tryal undergo,
 Till all their little dross was purged at last,
 The furnace had no more to do.
 There in rich Saturn's peaceful state
 Were they for sacred treasures placed—
 The Muse-discovered world of Islands Fortunate.

Soft-footed winds with tuneful voyces there
 Dance through the perfumed air.
 There silver rivers through enamell'd meadows glide,
 And golden trees enrich their side.
 Th' illustrious leaves no dropping autumn fear,
 And jewels for their fruit they bear,
 Which by the blest are gathered
 For bracelets to the arm, and garlands to the head.
 Here all the heroes and their poets live,
 Wise Radamanthus did the sentence give,
 Who for his justice was thought fit
 With sovereign Saturn on the bench to sit.
 Peleus here, and Cadmus reign,
 Here great Achilles, wrathful now no more,
 Since his blest mother (who before
 Had try'd it on his body in vain)
 Dipt now his soul in Stygian lake,
 Which did from thence a divine hardness take,
 That does from passion and from vice invulnerable make."

Carey's commencement is dull—his close is good—but the whole will never, on this earth, be gotten by heart. Cowley's conceits are cruel in Pindar's case—yet, in spite of them, there is a strange sublimity in the strain—at the end moral grandeur. Reginald Heber and Abraham Moore—especially Reginald—excel Carey; but Pindar in English is reserved for another age.

Dryden dashed at every poet—Theocritus, Lucretius, Persius, Horace, Juvenal, Ovid, Virgil, Homer—each in his turn unhesitatingly doth he take into his translating hands. In his Essay on Satire, he compares with one another the three Roman Satirists; but though he draws their characters with his usual force and freedom of touch, they are not finely distinctive—if coloured *con amore*, yet without due consideration. In the Preface to the Second Miscellany, he says of Horace's Satires, that they "are incomparably beyond Juvenal's, if to laugh and rally is to be preferred to raillery and declaiming." In his Essay, he says, "In my particular opinion, Juvenal is the more delightful writer." And again—"Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear; he fully satisfies my expectation; he treats his subject home; his spleen is raised, and he raises mine. I have the pleasure of concernment in all he says; he drives his reader along with him. * * * His thoughts are sharper; his indignation against vice more vehement; his spirit has more of the commonwealth genius;

he treats tyranny and all the vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour; and consequently a noble soul is better pleased with a zealous vindicator of Roman liberty, than with a *temporizing poet, a well-manner'd court-slave, and a man who is often afraid of laughing in the right place, who is ever decent because he is naturally servile.*" Is this Quintus Horatius Flaccus!

In Dryden and Juvenal are met peer and peer. Indignant scorn and moral disgust instigated the nervous hand of Juvenal, moulded to wield the scourge of satire. He is an orator in verse, speaking with power and command, skilled in the strength of the Roman speech, and practised in the weapons of rhetoric. But he is nevertheless a poet. Seized with impressions, you see his sail caught with driving gusts, if his eye be on the card. He snatches images right and left on his impetuous way, and flings them forth suddenly and vividly, so that they always tell. Perhaps he is more apt at binding a weighty thought in fewer words than his Translator, who felt himself at this disadvantage when he expressively portrayed the Latin as "a severe and compendious language." The Roman satirist has more care of himself; he maintains a prouder step; and the justifying incentive to this kind of poetry, hate with disdain of the vices and miseries to be lashed, more possesses his bosom. And what a wild insurrection of crimes and vices! What a challenge to hate and disdain in the minds in which the tradition of the antique virtues, the old *mores*, these edificers of the sublime Republic, had yet life! Rome under Nero and Domitian! Pedants have presumed to question the sincerity of his indignation, and have more than hinted that his power of picturing those enormous profligacies was inspired by the pleasure of a depraved imagination. Never was there falser charge. The times and the topics were not for delicate handling,—they were to be looked at boldly in the face,—and if spoken of at all, at full, and with unmistakeable words.

There is no gloating in his eyes when fixed in fire on guilt. Antipathy and abhorrence load with more revolting colours the hideous visage, from which, but for that moral purpose, they would recoil. But what, it may be asked, is the worth and use of a satire that drags out vices from their hiding-places to flay them in sunshine? They had no hiding-places. They affronted the daylight. But the question must be answered more comprehensively. The things told are—the

corruption of our own spirit has engendered them—and every great city, in one age or another, is a Rome. Consult Cowper. To know such things is one bitter and offending lesson in the knowledge of our nature. For the pure and simple such records are not written. It is a galling disclosure, a frightful warning for the anomalous race of the proud-impure. Gifford finely said of this greatest of satirists, that, “disregarding the claims of a vain urbanity, and fixing all his soul on the eternal distinctions of moral good and evil, he laboured with a magnificence of language peculiar to himself to set forth the loveliness of virtue, and the deformity and horror of vice, in full and perfect display.” The loveliness of virtue! Ay, in many a picture of the innocence and simplicity of the olden time—unelaborate but truthful—ever and anon presented for a few moments to show how happy humanity is in its goodness, and how its wickedness is degradation and misery. And there are many prolonged lofty strains sounding the praise of victorious virtue. They are for all time—and they, too, that magnify and glorify the spirit of liberty, then exiled from the city it had built, and never more to have dominion there, but regnant now in nations that know how to prize the genius it still continued to inspire when public virtue was dead.

Yet Dryden has not been altogether successful with Juvenal. In many places he is most slovenly—in many elaborately coarse beyond the coarseness ready-made to his hand—in some of the great passages, he leaves out what he feared to equal, and, in the face of all the principles in his own creed on translation, he often paraphrases with all possible effrontery, and lets himself loose to what is called imitation, till the original vanishes, to return, however, on a sudden, apparition-like, and with a voice of power, giving assurance of the real Juvenal.

His criticism on Lucretius is characteristic of them both. See how rashly, we had almost said foolishly, he rates the Epicurean for his belief in the mortality of the soul. Were there no better reason afforded by the light of nature, for a belief in its immortality than what Dryden throws out, human nature would not so earnestly have embraced, and so profoundly felt, and so clearly seen, the truth of the Christian dispensation.

“If he was not of the best age of Roman poetry, he was at least of that which preceded it; and he himself refined it to that degree of perfection, both in the language and the

thoughts, that he left an easy task to Virgil; who, as he succeeded him in time, so he copied his excellences; for the method of the Georgics is plainly derived from him. Lucretius had chosen a subject naturally crabbed; he, therefore, adorned it with poetical descriptions, and precepts of morality, in the beginning and ending of his books, which you see Virgil has imitated with great success in these four books, which, in my opinion, are more perfect in their kind than even his divine *Æneid*. The turn of his verses he has likewise followed in those places where Lucretius has most laboured, and some of his very lines he has transplanted into his own works, without much variation. If I am not mistaken, the distinguishing character of Lucretius (I mean of his soul and genius), is a certain kind of noble pride, and positive assertion of his opinions. He is everywhere confident of his own reason, and assuming an absolute command, not only over his vulgar reader, but even his patron Memmius. For he is always bidding him attend, as if he had the rod over him; and using a magisterial authority while he instructs him. From his time to ours, I know none so like him as our poet and philosopher of Malmesbury. This is that perpetual dictatorship which is exercised by Lucretius, who, though often in the wrong, yet seems to deal *bonâ fide* with his reader, and tells him nothing but what he thinks; in which plain sincerity, I believe, he differs from our Hobbes, who could not but be convinced, or at least doubt of some eternal truths, which he has opposed. But for Lucretius, he seems to disdain all manner of replies, and is so confident of his cause, that he is beforehand with his antagonists; urging for them whatever he imagines they could say, and leaving them, as he supposes, without an objection for the future; all this, too, with so much scorn and indignation, as if he were assured of the triumph before he entered into the lists. From this sublime and daring genius of his, it must of necessity come to pass, that his thoughts must be masculine, full of argumentation, and that sufficiently warm. From the same fiery temper proceeds the loftiness of his expressions, and the perpetual torrent of his verse, where the barrenness of his subject does not too much constrain the quickness of his fancy. For there is no doubt to be made, but that he could have been everywhere as poetical as he is in his descriptions, and in the moral part of his philosophy, if he had not aimed more to instruct, in his system of nature, than to delight. But he

was bent on making Memmius a materialist, and teaching him to defy an invisible power; in short, he was so much an atheist, that he forgot sometimes to be a poet. These are the considerations which I had of that author, before I attempted to translate some parts of him. And, accordingly, I laid by my natural diffidence and skepticism for a while, to take up that dogmatical way of his, which, as I said, is so much his character as to make him that individual poet. As for his opinions concerning the mortality of the soul, they are so absurd, that I cannot, if I would, believe them. I think a future state demonstrable even by natural arguments; at least, to take away rewards and punishments, is only a pleasing prospect to a man who resolves beforehand not to live morally. But, on the other side, the thought of being nothing after death is a burden insupportable to a virtuous man, even though a heathen. We naturally aim at happiness, and cannot bear to have it confined to the shortness of our present being; especially when we consider that virtue is generally unhappy in this world, and vice fortunate; so that it is hope of futurity alone, that makes this life tolerable in expectation of a better. Who would not commit all the excesses to which he is prompted by his natural inclinations, if he may do them with security while he is alive, and be incapable of punishment after he is dead? If he be cunning and secret enough to avoid the laws, there is no band of morality to restrain him; for fame and reputation are weak ties; many men have not the least sense of them. Powerful men are only awed by them, as they conduce to their interest, and that not always, when a passion is predominant; and no man will be contained within the bounds of duty when he may safely transgress them. These are my thoughts abstractedly, and without entering into the notions of our Christian faith, which is the proper business of divines.

"But there are other arguments in this poem (which I have turned into English) not belonging to the mortality of the soul, which are strong enough to a reasonable man, to make him less in love with life, and consequently in less apprehension of death. Such are the natural satiety proceeding from a perpetual enjoyment of the same things; the inconveniences of old age, which make him incapable of corporeal pleasures, the decay of understanding and memory, which render him contemptible and useless to others. These, and *many other reasons*, so pathetically urged, so beautifully ex-

pressed, so adorned with examples, and so admirably raised by the *prosopopeia* of nature, who is brought in speaking to her children with so much authority and vigour, deserve the pains I have taken with them, which, I hope, have not been unsuccessful or unworthy of my author; at least, I must take the liberty to own, that I was pleased with my own endeavours, which but rarely happens to me; and that I am not dissatisfied upon the review of anything I have done in this author."

Lucretius is a poet of a sublimer order than Dryden. Yet have they psychical affinities. The rush of poetical composition characterizes both—a ready pomp and splendour—more prodigality than economy—bold felicity rather than finish, though neither is that wanting—mastery of language and measure—touches from the natural world, that fall in more as a colouring of style, than the utterances of a heart imbued with a deep love of nature. Indeed, if the genial belongs to the physiognomy of Dryden's writing, the cordial is hardly a constituent in the character of either poet, although at need both can find eloquent expression even for the pathetic. In both, if in different measure, a skeptical vein is inherent; but in Lucretius this arms itself in logic, and he appears in his cosmogony as a philosophical atheist. In Dryden it might seem rather a humour leaned to, because on that side lies the pleasure of mockery and scoffing. Lucretius pleads his philosophy like a man who is incredulous in earnest. But you can seldom say what it is that Dryden embraces with seriousness, unless it be, in his better and happier undertakings, his own part in executing the work. The subject-matter might seem almost always rather accidentally brought to him, than affectionately sought by him; once out of his hands, it is dismissed from his heart; he often seems utterly to have forgotten opinions and persons in whom, not long before, he had taken the liveliest interest—careless of inconsistencies even in the same essay, assuredly one of the most self-contradicting of mortals. No man, some say, has a right to question another's religious faith, but all men have a right to judge of the professed principles on which it has been adopted, when those principles have been triumphantly propounded to the public in controversial treatises of elaborate verse. To reason powerfully not only in verse but rhyme, is no common achievement, and such fame is justly Dryden's; but how would the same reasoning have looked

in prose? His controversy with Stillingfleet shows—but so so. Does Lucretius write from a strong heart and a seduced understanding? Or, is it now to be quoted as a blameable unbelief that ridded itself of the Greek and Roman heaven and hell? There is one great and essential difference on the side of the Epicurean. An original poet, he seems to speak from a sweeping contemplation of the universe. We grudge that the boundless exuberance of painting should go to decorate the argumentation of an unfruitful system of doctrine. We want the sympathy with the purpose of the poet, that should for us harmonize the poem. He often strikes singularly high tones. Witness, among many other great passages, his argument on death, and his thunder-storm. And had the description of the heifer bemoaning and seeking her lost calf been Virgil's, we should have thought it had sprung from the heart of rural simplicity and love. Dryden and Lucretius agree in the negligent indifference which they show, when mere argumentation is in hand, to smoothness and ornament, and also in the wonderful facility with which they compel logical forms to obey the measure. There they are indeed truly great.

Lucretius's magnificent opening has invited Dryden to put forth his happiest strength. The profuse eloquence and beauty of the original are rendered. The passage, which may compete with any piece of translation in the language, is, with Dryden, a fragment:—

“ Delight of human kind, and gods above,
Parent of Rome, propitious Queen of Love;
Whose vital power, air, earth, and sea supplies,
And breeds what'er is born beneath the rolling skies;
For every kind, by thy prolific might,
Springs, and beholds the regions of the light.
Thee, goddess, thee the clouds and tempests fear,
And at thy pleasing presence disappear;
For thee the land in fragrant flowers is drest;
For thee the ocean smiles, and smoothes her wavy breast,
And heaven itself with more serene and purer light is blest.
For when the rising spring adorns the mead,
And a new scene of nature stands display'd,
When teeming buds, and cheerful greens appear,
And western gales unlock the lazy year;
The joyous birds thy welcome first express,
Whose native songs thy genial fire confess;
Then savage beasts bound o'er their slighted food,
Struck with thy darts, and tempt the raging flood.

All nature is thy gift; earth, air, and sea;
 Of all that breathes, the various progeny,
 Stung with delight, is goaded on by thee.
 O'er barren mountains, o'er the flowery plain,
 The leafy forest, and the liquid main,
 Extends thy uncontroll'd and boundless reign;
 Through all the living regions dost thou move,
 And scatter'st, where thou goest, the kindly seeds of love.
 Since, then, the race of every living thing
 Obeys thy power; since nothing new can spring
 Without thy warmth, without thy influence bear,
 Or beautiful or lovesome can appear;
 Be thou my aid, my tuneful song inspire,
 And kindle with thy own productive fire;
 While all thy province, Nature, I survey,
 And sing to Memmius an immortal lay
 Of heaven and earth, and everywhere thy wondrous power display:
 To Memmius, under thy sweet influence born,
 Whom thou with all thy gifts and graces dost adorn;
 The rather then assist my muse and me,
 Infusing verses worthy him and thee.
 Meantime on land and sea let barbarous discord cease,
 And lull the listening world in universal peace.
 To thee mankind their soft repose must owe,
 For thou alone that blessing canst bestow;
 Because the brutal business of the war
 Is managed by thy dreadful servant's care;
 Who oft retires from fighting fields, to prove
 The pleasing pains of thy eternal love;
 And panting on thy breast, supinely lies,
 While with thy heavenly form he feeds his eyes.
 When, wishing all, he nothing can deny,
 Thy charms in that auspicious moment try;
 With winning eloquence our peace implore,
 And quiet to the weary world restore."

Excellent English! and excellently representative of the Latin!

Dryden sometimes estranges his language from vulgar use by a Latinism; (he, himself, insists upon this, as a deliberate act of enriching our poor and barbarous tongue;) and in his highest writings, even where he has good matter that will sustain itself at due poetical height, here and there he has touches of an ornamental, imitative, and false poetical diction. But that is not his own style—not the style which he uses where he is fully himself. This is pure English, simple, masculine; turned into poetry by a true life of expression, and by the inhering melody of the numbers. That Lucretian Exordium he must have written in one of

his happiest veins—under the sting of the poetical æstrum. It is an instance where he was called to his task by desire.

In his greatest undertaking—his Translation of Virgil—he often had to write when the fervour was low and slack. The task was to be driven on; and it was luck if the best places of his author fell to the uncertain hour of his own inspiration. So possibly we may understand why sometimes, when his original seems to challenge a full exertion of power, he comes short of himself. The weariness of the long labour must often apologize for languor, where the claims of the matter are less importunate. But it is not easy—when culling for comparison some of the majestic or softer strains into which Virgil has thrown his full soul, which he has wrought with his most loving and exquisite skill—wholly to shut the door of belief against the uncharitable suggestion, —that the Translator less lively apprehended, than you yourself do, some Virgilian charm, which lay away from his own manner of thinking, and feeling, and of poetical art.

The story, so marvelous and pathetic, of the Thracian harper-king, and his bride strung by the serpent, is from of old the own tale of lovers and poets. The heart of the Lover dares the terrific and unimaginable road; and the voice and hand of the Minstrel subdue all impossibilities. Virgil was fortunate in a link, which gave to his Italian Man of the Fields an interest in the antique, strange, and touching Hellenic tradition; and he has improved his opportunity worthily of his theme, of his work, and of himself. The dextrous episode of Aristæus, visited with a plague in his beehives, for his fault in the death of Eurydice, ends, and by ending consummates, the poem which took life in the soul of the Mincian ploughboy, and to which the chief artist of Augustan Rome was content in bequeathing the perpetual trust of his fame. Impassioned, profound tenderness,—the creating high and pure spirit of beauty—the outwardly watchful and sensitive eye and ear—with tones at will fetched by listening imagination from the great deep of the wonderful, the solemn, the sublime,—these, and crowning these, that sweet, and subtle, and rare mastery, which avails, through translucent words, to reveal quick or slow motions and varying hues of the now visible mind—which on the stream of articulate sounds rolls along, self-evolving, and changing as the passion changes, a power of music,—these all are surprisingly contained within the SEVENTY-FIVE VERSES which

unfold the anger of Orpheus, now a forlorn and yet powerful ghost, and of the Nymphs, once her companions, for the twice-lost Eurydice.

It is a hard but a fair trial to set the Translator against the best of his author. It is to be presumed that Dryden, matched against the best of Virgil, has done his best. We have not room for the whole diamond, but shall display one or two of the brightest facets. Who has forgotten that shrinking of the awed and tender imagination, which shuns the actual telling that Eurydice died? Which announces her as doomed to die—*Moritura!* then says merely that she did not see in the deep grass the huge water-snake before her feet guarding the river-bank along which she fled! and then turns to pour on the ear the clamorous wail of her companions.

"Illa quidem, dum te fugeret per flumina præceps,
Immanem ante pedes hydram *moritura* puella
Servantem ripas altâ non vidit in herbâ."

At this first losing of Eurydice, the impetuous, wild wail of the Nymph sisterhood may, in the verse of the Mantuan, be heard with one burst, swelling and ringing over how many hills, champaigns, and rivers!

"At chorus æqualis Dryadum clamore supremos
Implerunt montes: ferunt Rhodopeiæ arces,
Atque Pangæa, ac Rhesi Mavonia tellus,
Atque Getæ, atque Hebrus, et Actias Orithyia."

That the vivid emphasis of a stormy sorrow—given to a picture of sound in the foregoing verses, by that distinctiveness of the multitudinous repetition—declines in the melodious four English representatives to a greatly more generalized expression, must, one may think, be ascribed to Dryden's despair of reconciling in his own rougher tongue the geography and the music. Nevertheless, the version is evidently and successfully studied, to mourn and complain.

"But all her fellow nymphs the mountains tear
With loud lament, and break the yielding air:
The realms of Mars remurmur all around,
And echoes to the Athenian shores resound."

It is good, but hardly reaches the purpose of the original clamour, so passionate, dirge-like, unearthly, and supernatural—at once telling the death—as they say that in some countries the king's death is never told in words, but with a clangour of shrieks only from the palace-top, which is echoed by

voices to voices on to the borders of his kingdom—at once, we say, supplying this point of the relation, and impressing upon you the superhuman character of the mourners, who are able not only to deplore, but likewise mysteriously and mightily to avenge.

The next three lines are also, as might be presumed, at the height, for they describe the paragon of lovers and harpers harping his affliction of love—

“Ipse cavá solans ægrum testudine amorem,
Te dulcis conjux, te solo in litore secum,
Te veniente die, te decedente, canebat !”

Musical, dolorous iteration, iteration ! Musical, wo-begone iteration, iteration ! What have we in English ?

“The unhappy husband, husband now no more,
Did, on his tuneful harp, his loss deplore,
And sought his mournful mind with music to restore.
On thee, dear wife, in deserts all alone,
He call’d, sigh’d, sang ; his griefs with day begun,
Nor were they finish’d with the setting sun.”

Studied verses undoubtedly—musical, and mournful, and iterative. The two triplets of rhyme have unquestionably this meaning ; and the bold choice of the homely-affectionate, “*dear wife*,” to render the more ornate “*dulcis conjux*,” is of a sincere simplicity, and as good English as may be. We see here a poetical method of equivalents—for “*on thee he call’d, sigh’d, sang*,” is intended to render the urgency and incessancy of *Te, Te, Te, Te!* But the singular and purely Virgilian artifice of construction in the second and third line, is abandoned without hope of imitation.

Orpheus goes down into hell.

“Tænariæ etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis,
Et caligantem nigrâ formidine lucum
Ingressus, Manesque adiit, Regemque tremendum,
Nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda.”

“Even to the dark dominions of the night
He took his way, thro’ forests void of light,
And dared amidst the trembling ghosts to sing,
And stood before the inexorable king.”

They are good verses, and might satisfy an English reader who knew not the original : albeit they do not attain—how should they ?—to the sullen weight of dark dread that loads the Latin Hexameters. Look at that—*REGEMQUE TREMENDUM!* And then, still, the insisting upon something more !

To what nameless Powers do they belong—those unassigned hearts, that are without the experience and intelligence of complying with human prayers?

The infatuation—*dementia*—which, on the verge of the rejoined light, turns back too soon the head of Orpheus towards her who follows him, is by Virgil said to be

“Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes!”

A verse awful by the measure which it preserves between the human of the first half—*ignoscenda quidem*—and the infernal of the second half—*scirent si ignoscere Manes*. It places before us, in comparison, the Flexible, which lives in sunshine upon the earth—and the Inflexible, which reigns in the gloom of Erebus underneath it.

What does Dryden? He takes down the still, severe majesty of Virgil by too much of the Flexible—by a double dose of humanity.

“A fault which easy pardon might receive,
Were lovers judges, or could Hell forgive.”

It is remarkable that he has himself quoted the line of Virgil with great praise, as one that approaches, within measure, to an Ovidian “turn.” He has himself overstepped the measure, and made it quite Ovidian.

The four verses which describe the fault of Orpheus, and the perception of it in hell, are unsurpassed:—

“Restitit; Eurydicenque suam jam luce sub ipsâ,
Immemor, heu! victusque animi respexit. Ibi omnis
Effusus labor: atque immitis rupta tyranni
Fœdera: terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernus.”

Only note the growing pathos from the beloved name to the naming of the dread act. EURYDICE—*suam*—*jam luce sub ipsâ*—*immemor*—*heu!*—*victusque animi*—*RESPEXIT*. Five links! Look, too, what a long way on in the verse that sin of backward-looking has brought you. There shall hardly be found another verse in Virgil which has a pause of that magnitude at that advance, in the measure. It is a great stretching on of the thought against the law of music, which usually controls you to place the logical in coincidence with the musical—step; but here you are urged on into the very midst, and beyond the midst, of the last dactyl—a musical sleight which must needs heighten that feeling, impressed by the grammatical structure, of a voluntary delay,—of un-

willingness to utter the word fraught with inevitable death—that mortal *RESPEXIT*! After this, there is here no poured out toil—no clashing and rending—No! here is the deep note of victory—the proclamation sounding out from the abyss that the prize which was carried off is regained. Thrice down—down—as low as the pools of Avernus breaks out a peal—

“Terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernus.”

This is the master with whom—and this the language, and this the measure with which—our translator competes—“*imparibus armis.*”

“For, near the confines of ethereal light,
And longing for the glimmering of a sight,
The unwary lover east his eyes behind,
Forgetful of the law, nor master of his mind.
Straight all his hopes exhaled in empty smoke,
And his long toils were forfeit for a look.
Three flashes of blue lightning gave the sign
Of covenants broke; three peals of thunder join.”

The falling off—the failure at the end is deplorable indeed; yet Dryden recovers himself, and much of what follows is very fine.

The outline of the Iliad interests man's everyday heart. A wife carried off—the retaliation—an invasion or siege—a fair captive withheld from ransom—a displeased God sending a plague—a high prince wronged, offended, sullenly withdrawn to his tent—war prosperous and adverse—a dear friend lost and wailed—a general by his death reconciled—that death avenged—a dead son redeemed by his father, and mourned by his people. To receive all this sufferance into the heart's depths, wants no specific association—no grounding historical knowledge. By virtue of those anthropical elements—which are, by a change of accidents, one to him and you, Homer, who happens to be a Greek, makes you one, and a Trojan, too, or rather you are with him in the human regions, and that fact sufficeth for all your soul's desires. But, though no critic, and unversed in the laws of Epos, which, by the way, are only discoverable in the poem which he created in obedience to them, and that were first revealed to him from heaven by its inspiring genius—nevertheless, you are affected throughout all your being by those laws, and but by them could not have been made “greater

than you know" by the Iliad. For the main action, or Achilleid, though you may not know it, has four great steps. From Achilles' wrong by Agamemnon to the death of Patroclus, is a movement of one tenour. From the death of Patroclus to the death of Hector, is an entirely new movement, though casually bound in the closest manner to that antecedent. The Games and Funeral of Patroclus is an independent action. The Restoration of Hector's body is a dependent and necessarily springing action, having a certain subsistency within itself. To the whole the seat of moving power is the bosom of Achilles. All the parts have perfect inter-obligation. Cut away any one, and there would be not a perilous gash, but a detraction fatal to the living frame. There is vital integrity from the beginning to the end. Nowhere can you stop till the great poet stops. Then you obtain rest—not glad rest; for say not that the Iliad ends happily. The spirit of war sits on the sepulchral mound of Hector expecting its prey, and the topmost towers of Ilion, in the gloom of doom, lower with the ruining that shall soon hide Mount Ida in a night of dust.

Forbid it, ye muses all! that we should whisper a word in dispraise of Maro. But for what it is, not for what it is not, we love the Æneid. The wafting over sea from an Asiatic to an Italian soil, and the setting there of the acorn, which, by the decree of the Destinies, shall, in distant ages, grow up into Rome, and the overshadowing Roman Empire—this majestic theme appeals to the reason, and to the reason taught in the history of the world. It is a deliberate, not an impassioning interest. And how dominionless over our sympathy has the glowing and tender-hearted Virgil, perhaps unavoidably, made the Hero, who impersonates his rational interest! How unlike is this Æneas to that Achilles, round whose young head, sacred to glory, Homer has gathered, as about one magnetic centre, his tearful, fiery, turbulent, majestic, and magnanimous humanities!

Confess we must, reluctantly, that Æneas chills the Æneid. It was not that Virgil had embraced a design greater than his poetical strength. But it was in more than one respect unfortunately, unpoetically, conditioned. That poetical foundation itself is to be made good by aggressive arms; and by tearing a betrothed and enamoured beautiful bride from the youthful and stately chivalrous prince, her lover, slain in fight against the invaders; whilst the poor girl is to be made

over to a widower, of whose gallantry the most that we know is his ill-care of his wife, and his running away from his mistress.

And thus, alas ! it cannot be denied, the design of the *Æneis* is carried through without our great natural sympathies, as respects its end—against them as respects its means. An insuperable difficulty ! Did Virgil mistake, then, in taking the subject ? One hardly dares say so. The national tradition offers to the national Epic poet the national Epic transaction ; and he accepts the offer. In doing so he allies by his theme his own to the Homeric Epos. With all this, however, we do feel that fiery, and all-powerful, and all-comprehensive genius projects the outline of the *Iliad* upon the canvas ; whilst in this poetical history of the Trojan plantation in Italy, we can ascribe to the general disposition and invention hardly more than a prudent and skillful intelligence. But the poetical soul, the creative fire then enters to possess the remainder of the task. Was, after all, a pitched battle not exactly the thing in the world the most kindly to the feelings and the best meted to the understanding of the poet, commissioned to renown with verse the people who fought more, and more successful, pitched battles than any other in the world ?

Were Virgil to write now, and you had to allot him his theme, what would it be ? A romance of knight-errantry ? You would allot him none. You would leave him free to the suggestions of his own delicious spirit. But he thought himself bound to the Latin Epos. To speak in true critical severity, the *Æneis* has no Hero. It has a HEROINE. And who, pray, is SHE ? The seven-hilled Queen of the World. Like another Cybele, with her turreted diadem, and gods for her children, in her arms and in her lap. Herself heaven-descended—IMPERIAL ROME.

The two prophetic Episodes—the Muster of the pre-existing ghosts before the eyes of the great human ancestor, Anchises, in his Elysium—and those anticipatory narrative Embossings of the Vulcanian shield, become in this view integral and principal portions of the poem. That reviewing beside that Elysian river, of the souls that are to animate Roman breasts, and to figure in Roman chronicles, gave opportunity to Virgil of one Prophecy that mingled mourning with triumph, and triumph with mourning. Victorious over the Punic—victorious over the Gallic foe—carrying to the

temple the arms which he, a leader, stripped from a leader—the third consecrator of such spoils—goes Marcellus. But who is He that moves at the side of the hero? A youth, distinguished by his beauty and by his lustrous arms. The Souls throng, with officious tumult, about him—and how much he resembles his great companion! But on his destined brow sits no triumphal lustre—mists and night cling about his head. Who is it? Æneas inquires—and Anchises would fain withhold the reply. It is the descendant of that elder Marcellus; and promises, were fatal decrees mutable, to renew the prowess and praises of his famed progenitor. Fatal decrees might not change, and the nephew of Augustus, the destined successor of his reign, and the hopes of the Romans—OBIT. You have often wept over Virgil's verses, here are Dryden's:—

“ Æneas here beheld, of form divine,
A godlike youth in glittering armour shine,
With great Marcellus keeping equal pace;
But gloomy were his eyes, dejected was his face.
He saw, and wond'ring, ask'd his airy guide,
What, and of whence was he, who press'd the hero's side?
' His son, or one of his illustrious name!
How like the former, and almost the same!
Observe the crowds that compass him around;
All gaze, and all admire, and raise a shouting sound:
But hov'ring mists around his brows are spread,
And night, with sable shades, involve his head.'
' Seek not to know (the ghost replied with tears),
The sorrows of thy sons in future years.
This youth (the blissful vision of a day),
Shall just be shown on earth, then snatch'd away.
The gods too high had raised the Roman state,
Were but their gifts as permanent as great.
What groans of men shall fill the Martian field!
How fierce a blaze his flaming pile shall yield!
What funeral pomp shall floating Tyber see,
When, rising from his bed, he views the sad solemnity!
No youth shall equal hopes of glory give,
No youth afford so great a cause to grieve.
The Trojan honour, and the Roman boast,
Admired when living, and adored when lost!
Mirror of ancient faith in early youth!
Undaunted worth, inviolable truth!
No foe, unpunish'd, in the fighting field
Shall dare thee, foot to foot, with sword and shield.
Much less in arms oppose thy matchless force,
When thy sharp spurs shall urge thy foaming horse.

Ah ! could'st thou break through Fate's severe decree,
 A new Marcellus shall arise in thee !
 Full canisters of fragrant lilies bring,
 Mix'd with the purple roses of the spring ;
 Let me with funeral flowers his body strow ;
 This gift which parents to their children owe,
 This unavailing gift, at least, I may bestow ! ”

Here is an excellent flow. The sorrow and the pride and the public love which are the life of the original, are all taken to heart by the translator, who succeeds in imparting to you the most touching of poetical eulogies. You find, as usually everywhere, that the vigorous purpose of the original is maintained, and well rendered, but that certain Virgilian fascinations, which—whether they bewitch your heart or your fancy, or your ear, you do not know—are hardly given you back. Thus it might be very hard to say what you have found that you cannot forget again, in such a verse as that which introduces to your eye the subject of the more effusive praise.

“ Atque hic Æneas, una namque ire videbat
 Egregium formâ juvenem, et fulgentibus armis.”

Yet you do not again forget that second line.

Dryden's rendering is equivalent for the meaning, and unblameable.

“ Æneas here beheld of form divine,
 A godlike youth, in glittering armour shine.”

The phrase is even heightened ; but it does not loiter, like that other, in your memory. The very heightening has injured the image—the shadow that shone brighter in simple words.

The shadow then thrown across—

“ Sed frons læta parum ”—

is well given, with a variation, by—

“ But gloomy were his eyes.”

The lightlessness is feelingly placed where the chief light should be.

The unequaled

“ Ostendent terris hunc tantum Fata,”

so fully signifying the magnitude of the gift offered and with-

drawn—so sadly the brief promise, and all so concisely, meets with a soft and bright rendering in

“The *blissful vision* of a day.”

But Dryden’s “shown *on earth*,” less positively affirms the loss fallen upon the earth, than the Latin “shall show to the nations.”

The praise involving the recollection of the manners which were—

“Heu pietas! heu prisca fides! invictaque bello
Dextera!”

is given with admirable fervour.

“Mirror of ancient faith, in early youth
Undaunted worth! inviolable truth!”

As for *those three words* that smote, as the tradition goes, the heart of the too deeply concerned auditress, the bereaved mother herself, to swooning—

“*Tu Marcellus eris!*”

they are, no doubt, in their overwhelming simplicity, untransferable to our uncouth idiom; and our ears may thank Dryden for the skill with which, by a “New Marcellus,” and an otherwise explanatory paraphrase, he has kept the Virgilian music. Meantime the passionate vehemence of the breaking away from that prophecy of intolerable grief—the call for the bestrewnment of flowers—

“*Manibus date lilia plenis,*” &c.

must be weakened, if the moment of the transition is to fall, as we see it in Dryden, at the interval between verse and verse, and not, as we have just seen it with Virgil at the juncture within the verse of hemistich with hemistich.

“*Tu Marcellus eris.—Manibus date lilia plenis,*” &c.

There is a pause in that line, during which the mother, had she not swooned, might have calmed her heart!

It is usual to discover that Virgil wants originality—that he transcribes his battles from Homer. In truth, it was not easy, with fights of the Homeric ages, to do otherwise. However, Virgil has done otherwise, if any one will be at the pains to look.

For instance, an incident, not in the battles by the Xanthus, is the following:—

: A powerful Tuscan warrior, infuriated by the ill fighting of his men, distinguishes himself by an extraordinary feat. Claspings round the body, and so unhorsing a lighter antagonist, he rides off with him; snaps the javelin, which his captive still grasps, near the head, and with its point probes and aims for a vulnerable place. The unfortunate Latine, as he lies across the horse's neck, struggles, and will baffle the deathly blow. Landseer could suggest no more vivid comparison, than one which leaps into your own imagination—a snake soused upon by an eagle.

“So stoops the yellow eagle from on high,
And bears a speckled serpent through the sky,
Fastening his crooked talons on the prey:
The prisoner hisses through the liquid way;
Resists the royal hawk, and though oppress,
She fights in columns and erects her crest:
Turn'd to her foe, she stiffens every scale,
And shoots her forky tongue, and whisks her threat'ning tail.
Against the victor all defence is weak;
The imperial bird still plies her with his beak,
He tears her bowels, and her heart he gores,
Then clasps his pinions and securely soars.”

A glorious paraphrase!

This is an incident more like a knight of Ariosto's, the terrible Sarazin Rhodomont, or Orlando himself, than Homer's, who did not, indeed, combat on horseback.

But speaking of the moderns, we will venture to say, that if Virgil has copied, he is also an original who has been copied. And we will ask, who is the prototype of the ladies, turned knights, who flourish in favour with our poets of romance?—with Ariosto, with Tasso, with our own Spenser? Who but the heroic virgin ally of the Rutulian prince—who but CAMILLA?

We name her, however, neither for her own sake, nor for Virgil's, but for Dryden's, who seems also to have taken her into favour, and to have written, with a peculiar spirit and feeling, the parts of the poem which represent her in action.

She leads her Amazons into Italian fields, warring against the fate-driven fugitives of overthrown Troy. Whence were her Amazon followers? Whence is She? Her history, her divine patroness, Diana, relates. Her father, the strong-limbed, rude-souled Metabus, a wild and intractable Volscian king, fled from the face and from the pursuit of his people. He bore, in his arms, one dear treasure; a com-

panion of his flight; yet an infant—this daughter. He flies. The Amasenus, in flood, bars his way. More doubtful for his charge than for himself, hastily, with love-prompted art, he swathes the babe in stripped bark—binds her to the shaft of his huge oaken spear—dedicates her with a prayer to the virgin goddess of woods, and of the woodland chase—hurls, from a gigantic hand, the weapon across the tempestuous flood—and, ere his pursuers have reached him, plunges in, breasts the waters, and, saving and saved, swims across. In the forest depths, amongst imbosoming hills, the rugged sire fosters the vowed follower of Diana. The nursing of the wild grows up a bold and skilled huntress; and now that war storms in the land, she, with her huntress companions, joins the war. Some unexplained reconciliation, or perhaps restoration, has taken effect; for, along with her armed maidens, she leads the troops of the Volscians. In the field she fights like a virago; but her entrance thither was against the desire of the goddess, for it dooms her to die. Her eager following of a gorgeously armed warrior exposes her to a treacherous aim, and she falls. The provident goddess had put her own bow, and an arrow from her own quiver, into the hands of a nymph chosen to execute the vengeance of the impending death, and that arrow flies to its mark.

“Nor, after that, in towns which walls enclose,
 Would trust his hunted life amidst his foes;
 But, rough, in open air he chose to lie;
 Earth was his couch, his covering was the sky.
 On hills unshorn, or in a desert den,
 He shunn’d the dire society of men.
 A shepherd’s solitary life he led;
 His daughter with the milk of mares he fed.
 The dugs of bears, and every savage beast,
 He drew, and through her lips the liquor press’d.
 The little amazon could scarcely go,
 He loads her with a quiver and a bow;
 And, that she might her staggering steps command,
 He with a slender javelin fills her hand.
 Her flowing hair no golden fillet bound;
 Nor swept her trailing robe the dusty ground.
 Instead of these, a tiger’s hide o’erspread
 Her back and shoulders, fasten’d to her head.
 The flying dart she first attempts to fling,
 And round her tender temples toss’d the sling;
 Then as her strength with years increased, began
 To pierce aloft in air the soaring swan,
 And from the clouds to fetch the heron and the crane.”

The Tuscan matrons with each other vied,
 To bless their rival sons with such a bride;
 But she disdains their love, to share with me
 The sylvan shades, and vow'd virginity.
 And oh! I wish, contented with my cares
 Of savage spoils, she had not sought the wars.
 Then had she been of my celestial train,
 And shunn'd the fate that dooms her to be slain.
 But since, opposing heaven's decree, she goes
 To find her death among forbidden foes,
 Haste with these arms, and take thy sleepy flight,
 Where, with the gods adverse, the Latins fight.
 This bow to thee, this quiver, I bequeath,
 This chosen arrow to avenge her death:
 By whate'er hand Camilla shall be slain,
 Or of the Trojan or Italian train,
 Let him not pass unpunish'd from the plain.
 'Then, in a hollow cloud, myself will aid
 To bear the breathless body of my maid:
 Unspoil'd shall be her arms, and unprofaned
 Her holy limbs with any human hand,
 And in a marble tomb laid in her native land."

What is Virgil's in this fair and romantically cast fiction? What hints did the traditionary fable give him? You are not concerned to make an inquiry which you have no means of satisfying. You must hold Camilla to be as much Virgil's as anything is Homer's in the *Iliad*. The painting throughout is to the life, and perfectly graceful. The subject was one likely to attach the imagination of a modern poet, and you feel all along, that pleasure inspirits the happy translation of Dryden.

The Destruction of Troy, the Love of Dido, the Descent into Hell, entire Cantos of the poem, take deep and lasting possession of every reader; and, like the first and second books of the *Paradise Lost*, too much seduce admiration from the remainder of the work. You pick out from the whole Italian war, Lausus, Pallas, Nisus, and Euryalus, and think that you have done with Virgil.

We beg to propose a literary experiment. Homer has left us two poems—a War, and a Wandering. Virgil has bequeathed us one, representing those two, and that proportionally; although in the Latin the *Odyssey* comes first, and the *Iliad* follows. For the first six *Æneids* relate the wandering; whilst the latter six display the war. Let us, therefore, fairly cut the great outrolling, unfolding picture in two, and have

two poems, distinct, although closely allied; twins, moulded in one womb, nourished from the same blood. We dare to predict that the poem of "*Æneas in Italy*," now considered with its own independent interests, and after its own art and management, will duly compete with its rival, "*Æneas Fugitive*."

How the whole movement, and march, and original conduct of the Italian war will come out! The peaceful entertainment of the Trojans by Latinus, moved with old and new prophecies, and his ready offer of his daughter, Lavinia, to *Æneas* in marriage—the adverse interposition of Juno—her summoning of *Alecto* from hell—the glad Fury's fine discharge of her part—her maddening of the Queen *Amata*, who loves *Turnus*, hates the strangers, and catches in her own madness all the Latin mothers—the INFURIATING of the young, gallant, ardent, defrauded, princely lover himself—a splendid scene, where the hot warrior's jeers of the fiend in her beldam disguise, sting her Tartarean heart as if it had been a woman's, and for very wrath she reveals her terrible self—then that exquisite incident, won from the new matter of the poet, from the PASTORAL manners with which he is historically obliged to deal in Italy—the Fury's third and last feat—her drawing-on of *Ascanius'* hounds to hunt the beautiful favourite stag, which the daughter of the king's chief herdsman petted—and, thence, a quarrel, a skirmish, slaughter begun, and the whole population of the plains aroused. And so with bacchanal women, with Rutulians, and with his own rude liegemen in tumult, the old king overborne—shutting himself up in his palace; and war inflamed in *Hesperia*, to the full heart's-wish of *Jove's* imperial wife, who has nothing left her to do more than, descending again from the sky, to push open with her own hands the brazen-gated temple of *Janus*.

All this is very poetical—is very different from the *Iliad*, and is perfectly measured to the scale of a war, moved not by confederated Greece for the overthrow of an Asiatic empire, but by the tribes of the coast for beating back the crews of a few straggling ships from planting a colony, who have nothing on their side but their valour, their fame, and their fates.

Analyze this war; make out for yourself, distinctly, the story, of which in a poem one always too easily loses the sequence, delight and emotion making one less observant; then understand the poetical workings out, in their places and

after their bearings ; and you will satisfy yourself, that although the cleaving of heads, and the transpiercing of trunks, and the hewing off of limbs, are processes that must always keep up a certain general resemblance to themselves, you have not a campaign imitated from the Iliad ; but an original one—proper to person and place.

DRYDEN ON CHAUCER.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

Nothing is gained by attempting to deny or to disguise a known and plain fact, simply because it happens to be a distasteful one. Time has estranged us from Chaucer. Dryden and Pope we read with easy, unearned pleasure. Their speech, their manner of mind, and their facile verse, are of our age, almost of our own day. The two excellent, graceful, and masterly poets belong, both of them, to **THIS NEW WORLD**. Go back a little, step over an imperceptible line, to the cotemporary of Dryden, Milton, and you seem to have overleaped some great chronological boundary; you have transported yourself into **THAT OLD WORLD**. Whether the historical date, or the gigantic soul, or the learned art, make the separation, the fact is clear, that the poet of the "*Paradise Lost*" stands decidedly further off; and, more or less, you must acquire the taste and intelligence of the poem. Why, up to this hour, probably, there are three-fifths of the poem that you have not read; or, if you have read all, and go along with all, you have yourself had experience of the progress, and have felt your capacity of Milton grow and dilate. So has it been with your capacity for Shakspeare, or you are a truant and an idler. To comprehend with delight Milton and Shakspeare as poets, you need, from the beginning, a soul otherwise touched and gifted for poesy than Pope claims of you, or Dryden. The great elder masters, being original, require of you springs of poesy welling in your own spirit; while the two latter, imitative artists of luxury, exact from you nothing more, in the way of poetical endowment, than the gusto of ease and luxurious enchantment. To prefer, for some intellectual journey, the smooth wafture of an air-gliding car—to look with pleasure upon a dance of bright-hued images—to hear more sweetness in Philomela's descant than in a Turkish concert—to be ever

so little sensible to the bliss of dreams—ever so little sick of reality, and ever so little glad to be rid of it for an hour—is qualification enough to make you a willing and able reader of verse in the latter school. But if you are to prefer the style of the antecessors, other conditions must come in. It is, then, not a question merely whether you see and love in Imogen the ideal of a wife in love with her husband, or take to the surpassing and inimitable portraiture of the “lost archangel” in Satan; but whether you feel the sweetness of Imogen’s soul in the music of her expressions—whether you hear the tones of the Will that not the thunder has quelled, in that voice to which all “the hollow deep of hell resounded.” If you do, assuredly you will perceive in yourself that these are discernments of a higher cast, and that place you upon a higher degree when critics on poetry come to be ranked, than when you had nothing better to say for yourself than that your bosom bled at the *Elegy* on an Unfortunate Young Lady, or that you varied with Alexander to the varying current of the *Ode* of St. Cecilia’s Day.

We call Chaucer the Father of our Poetry, or its Morning Star. The poetical memory of the country stretches up to him, and not beyond. The commanding impression which he has made upon the minds of his people dates from his own day. The old poets of England and Scotland constantly and unanimously acknowledge him for their master. Greatest names, Dunbar, Douglas, Spenser, Milton carry on the tradition of his renown and his reign.

In part he belongs to, and in part he lifts himself out of, his age. The vernacular poetry of reviving Europe took a strong stamp from one principal feature in the manners of the times. The wonderful political institution of Chivalry—turned into a romance in the minds of those in whose persons the thing itself subsisted—raised up a fanciful adoration of women into a law of courtly life; or, at the least, of courtly verse, to which there was nothing answerable in the annals of the old world. For though the chief and most potent of human passions has never lacked its place at the side of war in the song that spoke of heroes—though two beautiful captives, and a runaway wife bestowed by the Goddess of Beauty, and herself the paragon of beauty to all tongues and ages, have grounded the *Iliad*—though the Scæan gate, from which Hector began to flee his inevitable foe, and where that goddess-born foe himself stooped to des-

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tiny, be also remembered for the last parting of a husband and a wife—though Circe and Calypso have hindered home-bound Ulysses from the longing arms of Penelope—and Jason, leading the flower of a prior and yet more heroic generation, must first win the heart of Medea before he may attain the Golden Fleece—though the veritable nature of the human being has ever thus, through its strongest passion, imaged itself in its most exquisite mirror, Poetry—yet there did, in reawaking Europe, a new love-poetry arise, distinctively characterized by the omnipotence which it ascribed to the Love-god, legitimating in him an usurped supremacy, and exhibiting, in artificial and wilful excess, that passion which the older poets drew in its powerful but unexaggerated and natural proportions.

Thenceforwards the verse of the South and of the North, and alike the forgotten and the imperishable, all attest the predominancy of the same star. Diamond eyes and ruby lips stir into sound the lute of the Troubadours and the Minnesingers. Famous bearers of either name were knights distinguished in the lists and in the field. And who is it that stole from heaven the immortal fire of genius for Petrarch? Laura. Who is the guide of Dante through Paradise? Beatrice. In our own language, the spirit of love breathes, more than in any other poet, in Spenser. His great poem is one Lay of Love, embodying and associating that idealized, chivalrous, and romantic union of "fierce warres and faithful loves." It hovers above the earth in some region exempt from mortal footing—wars such as never were, loves such as never were—and all—Allegory! One ethereal extravagance! A motto may be taken from him to describe that ascendancy of the love-planet in the poetical sky of renewed Europe. It alludes to the love-freaks of the old Pagan deities upon earth, in which the King of the Gods excelled, as might be supposed, all the others.

"While thus on earth great Jove these pageants play'd,
The winged boy did thrust into his throne;
And scoffing thus, unto his mother sayde
'Lo! now the heavens obey to me alone
And take me for their Jove, now Jove to earth is gone.'"

The pure truth of the poetical inspiration which rests upon Spenser's poems, when compared to the absolute departure from reality apparent in the manners of his heroes and heroines, and in the physical world which they inhabit, is a

phenomenon which may well perplex the philosophical critic. You will hardly dare to refuse to any true poet the self-election of his materials. Grant, therefore, to Spenser knight-errantry—grant him dragons, and enchanters, and enchanted gardens, satyrs, and the goddess Night on her chariot—grant him love as the single purpose of human life—a faëry power leading with a faëry band his faëry world! But while you accept this Poem as the lawful consummation and ending of that fabulous intellectual system or dream which had subsisted with authority for centuries, it is wonderful to see how, in the very day of Spenser, the *STAGE* recovers humanity and nature to poetry—recalls poetry to nature and humanity! Shakspeare and Spenser, what cotemporaries! The world that *is*, and the world that *is not*, twinned in time and in power!

This exaggeration of an immense natural power, Love—making, one might almost say, man's worship of woman the great religion of the universe, and which was the "*amabilis insania*" of the new poetry—long exercised an unlimited monarchy in the poetical mind of the reasonable Chaucer. See the longest and most desperate of his Translations—which Tyrwhitt supposes him to have completed, though we have only two fragments—seven thousand verses in place of twenty-two thousand—the "*ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE*," otherwise entitled the "*Art of Love*," "wherein are showed the helps and furtherances, as also the lets and impediments, that lovers have in their suits." Then comes the work upon which Sir Philip Sydney seems to rest the right of Chaucer to the renown of an excellent poet having the insight of his art—the five long books which celebrate the type of all true lovers, Troilus, and of all false traitresses, Creseide. Then there is "*The Legende of Good Women*," the loving heroines, fabulous and historical, of Lemprière's Dictionary. The first name is decisive upon the signification of "*goode*,"—Cleopatra, Queene of Egypt—Tisbe of Babylon—Dido, Queene of Carthage—Hipsiphile and Medea, betrayed both by the same "root of false lovers, Duk Jason"—Lucrece of Rome—Ariadne of Athens—Philomen—Phyllis—Hypermetra.

The "*Assemblee of Fowles*" is all for love and allegory. Chaucer has been reading Scipio's dream. Whereon he himself dreams that "*Affrican*" comes to him and carries him away into a sort of Love's Paradise. There were trees with

leaves "grene as emeraude," a garden full of "blossomed bowis," running waters in which small fishes light, with red fins and silver-bright scales, dart to and fro, flowers of all tinctures, all manner of live creatures, and a concert commingled of stringed instruments, of leaves murmuring to the wind, and of singing-birds. Under a tree, beside a spring, was "Cupide our Lord" forging and filing his arrows—his daughter (*woto is she?*) assisting, and tempering them to various effects. A host of allegorical persons are in attendance of course; and there, too, stands a Temple of Venus, described from the Teseida of Boccaccio. But the principal personage whom Chaucer encounters, and the most busily engaged, is the great goddess, NATURE. It is St. Valentine's Day, whereon all the birds choose their mates for the coming year. The particular business to which *this* anniversary of the genial Saint was devoted was intelligible, no doubt, to the quick wits of Chaucer's age, if to the dull ones of ours a little perplexing. Nature held in her hand "a formell eagle, of shape the gentlest," benign, goodly, and so full of every virtue, that "Nature herself had blisse too look on her, and oft her becke to kisse." The question is, who shall be her mate? Three "tercell eagles" offer themselves, and eagerly plead their claims. The four orders of fowl, those "of ravine," those that feed on insects, the water-fowl, and those that eat seed, are by nature required to elect each a delegate that shall opine on the matter. The birds of prey depute "the tercelet of the faucon." He gives the somewhat startling if otherwise plausible advice, that the worthiest of knighthood, and that has the longest used it, and that is of the greatest estate, and of blood the gentlest, shall be preferred, leaving the decision of those merits to the lady eagle. The goose, on the behalf of the water-fowl, merely advises that he who is rejected, shall console himself by choosing another love; which ignominious and anserine suggestion is received by the "gentill foules" with a general laugh. The "turtle-dove," for the seed-eating birds, indignantly protests against this outrageous and impracticable proposal. The cuckoo, for the worm-eaters, provided that he may have his own "make," is willing that the three wooers shall live each solitary and sullen. The "sperhawke," the "gentle tercelet," and the "ermelon," severally reply in high scorn to the goose, to the duck who seconds the goose, and to the cuckoo. Dame Nature ends the plea by referring the choice to the "formell eagle" her-

self, who begs a year's respite, which is granted her. The rest, for the day is now well spent, choose their mates—an elect choir sing a roundel in honour of Nature; and at the “shouting” that, when the song was done, the fowls made in flying away, the Poet awoke! Amongst the hard points of this enigmatical love-allegory are, that when the first lover, a “royal turcell,” has ended his plea, the “formell eagle” *blushes*! as does afterwards the turtle upon the proposal made of changing an old love for a new, and that the duck swears by his *hat*. Be the specific intent what it may, the general bearing speaks for itself, namely, the unmeasured lifting-up of Love's supremacy—though we cannot help feeling how much nearer Chaucer was to the riddling days of poetry than we are. Did the old Poet translate from plain English into the language of Birds, and expect us to re-translate? Or are these blushes and this knighthood amongst birds merely regular adjuncts in any fable that attributes to the inferior creation human powers of reason and speech? It is curious that the *rapacious* fowls are presented as excelling in high and delicate sentiment! They are the aristocracy of the birds, plainly; yet an aristocracy described as of “ravine” seems to receive but an equivocal compliment.

The HOUSE OF FAME is in Three Books. The title bespeaks Allegory; and the machinery, which justifies the allegory, as usual is a Dream. But the title does not bespeak, what is nevertheless true, that here, too, love steals in. During the entire First Book, the poet dreams himself to be in the temple of Venus, all graven over with Æneas's history, taken point by point from the Mantuan. The history belongs properly to its place; not because Æneas is the son of Venus, but because the course of events is conducted by Jupiter consonantly to the prayer of Venus. Why the House of Venus takes up a third part of the poem to be devoted to the House of Fame is less apparent. Is the poet crazed with love? and so driven against method to dream, perforce, of the divinity who rules over his destiny, as she did over her son's? Or does the *fame* conferred by Virgil upon Æneas make it reasonable that the dream should proceed by the House of one Goddess to that of the other? Having surveyed the whole, the poet goes out to look in what part of the world he is, when Jupiter's eagle seizes upon him and carries him up to the city and palace of Fame, seated above the region of tempests, but apparently below the stars, and there sets him down. The Second Book

is spent in their conversation during their flight. Some singular inventions occur. Every word spoken on earth, is carried up by natural reverberation to the House of Fame; but, there arrived, puts on the likeness of the wight, in his habit as he lives, that has uttered it. The palace itself stands upon a rock of ice, inscribed with names. Those on the southern face are nearly melted away by the heat of the sun; those on the northern stand sharp and clear. Some of the minstrels—Orpheus of old, and the later Breton Glaskirion, he hears playing yet. The great Epopeists are less agreeably occupied. "Omer," and aiding him, "Dares," "Titus," "Lolius," "Guido" the Colempnis, that is, of Colonna, and English Galfrida, standing high upon a pillar of iron, "are busie to bear up Troy" upon their shoulders. Virgil, upon a pillar "of tinned iron clere," supports "the fame of pious Æneas." Near, upon a pillar of iron, "wrought full sternly," the "grete poete, Dan Lucan," bears upon his shoulders the "fame of Julius and Pompee." An innumerable company kneel before the goddess herself, beseeching her for renown. She deals out her favours capriciously—to one company of well-deservers, utter silence and oblivion—to another, like meritorious, loud slanders and infamy—to another assembly with similar claims, golden, immortal praises. A fourth and a fifth company have done good for the pure sake of goodness, and request of her to hide their deeds and their name. To the one she readily grants their asking. To the other not—but bids her trumpet "Eolus" ring out their works so that all the world may hear, which happens accordingly. Another throng have been sheer idlers upon the earth, doers of neither good nor ill. They desire to pass for worthy, wise, good, rich, and in particular, for having been favourably regarded by the brightest eyes. The whole of this undeserved reputation is instantaneously granted them. Another troop follow with like desert and with like request. Eolus takes up as bidden his "black clarioun," and blazons their dishonour. A troop of evil-doers ask for good fame. The goddess is not in the humour, and takes no notice of them. The last corners of all are delighters in wickedness for its own sake, and request their due ill-fame. Amongst them is "that ilke shrew that brente the temple of Isidis in Athenes." This is, no doubt, the gentleman who burned the Temple of Diana at Ephesus for that laudable purpose. The goddess is complaisant, and grants them exactly their desire.

There stands by the first, a second House of Fame of a strange sort. It is built cage-like of twigs, is sixty miles in length, whirls incessantly about, and is full of all imaginable noises—the rumours of all events, private and public, that happen upon earth, including murrains, tempests, and conflagrations. The eagle gets the dreamer in, and he notes the humours of the place. This is most remarkable, that as soon as any one of the innumerable persons, in press, there hears a tidings, he forthwith whispers it with an addition to another, and he, with a further eking, to a third, until in a little while it is known everywhere, and has attained immeasurable magnitude—as from a spark the fire is kindled that burns down a city. The tidings fly out at the windows. A true and a false tidings jostled in their way out, and after some jangling for precedency, agreed to fly together. Since which time, no lie is without some truth, and no truth without some falsehood. An unknown person of great reverence and authority making his appearance, the poet, apparently disturbed with awe, awakes, wonders, and falls to writing his dream.

The criticism of so strange a composition is hardly to be attempted. It shows a bold and free spirit of invention, and some great and poetical conceiving. The wilful, now just, now perverse, dispensing of fame, belongs to a mind that has meditated upon the human world. The poem is one of the smaller number, which seems hitherto to stand free from the suspicion of having been taken from other poets. For Chaucer helped himself to everything worth using that came to hand.

The earlier writings of Chaucer have several marks that belong to the literature of the time.

First, an excessive and critical self-dedication of the writer to the service of Love, this power being for the most part arrayed as a sovereign divinity, now in the person of the classical goddess Venus, and now of her son, the god Cupid. Secondly, an ungovernable propensity to allegorical fiction. The scheme of innumerable poems is merely allegorical. In others, the allegorical vein breaks in from time to time. Thirdly, a Dream was a vehicle much in use for effecting the transit of the fancy from the real to the poetical world. Chaucer has many dreams. Fourthly, interminable delight in expatiating upon the simplest sights and sounds of the natural world. This overflows all Chaucer's earlier poems. In some he largely describes the scene of adventure—in

some, the desire of solace in field and wood leads him into the scene. Fifthly, a truly magnanimous indifference to the flight of time and to the cost of parchment, expressed in the dilatation of a slender matter through an infinite series of verses. You wonder at the facility of writing in the infancy of art. It seems to resemble the exuberant, untiring activity of children prompted by a vital delight which overflows into the readiest utterance; and, in proportion to its display, achieving the less that is referable to any purpose of enduring use. Even the admired and elaborately written *Troilus* and *Creseide* is a great specimen. The action is nearly null; the discoursing of the persons and of the poet endless. It is not, then, simply the facility of the eight-syllabled couplet, as in that interminable *Chaucer's Dreame*, that betrays; [there is a dogged purpose of going on for ever.

Of the poems expressly of Love, are, "The Romaunt of the Rose—*Troilus* and *Creseide*—The Legende of Goode Women—The Asseblee of Foules—Of Queen Annelida and false Arcita—The Complaint of the Blacke Knight—The Complaint of Mars and Venus—Of the Cuckou and the Nightingale—The Court of Love—Chaucer's *Dreame*—The Flour and the Leaf—The First Booke of the House of Fame"—and, if you choose, the "Boke of the Duchesse," which is John of Gaunt's mourning for his lost wife. There must be something like thirty thousand verses, long, short, in couplets or stanzas, which may be said to be dedicated to Love!

And of them all, only the four following Poems tread the plain ground—have their footing upon the same earth that we walk—*Troilus* and *Creseide*, The Legende of Goode Women, Queen Annelida and False Arcita, the Complaint of the Blacke Knight. We grant them for human and real, notwithstanding that most of the persons are of a very romantic and apocryphal stamp—because they are not presented in dreams or visions, and are not allegorical creations of beings out of the air, Impersonations of Ideas. They are offered as men and women, downright flesh and blood, and so are to be understood. Nevertheless even here, when Chaucer is nearest home, taking his subject in his own day, and putting his own friend and patrons in verse, there is a trick of the riddling faculty, since the Blacke Knight lodging, during the love-month of May, in the greenwood, and bemoaning all day long his hard lovehap, represents, it is presumed, old stout

John of Gaunt in love, who might utter his passion, uncertain of requital,

“In groans that thunder love, in sighs of fire;”

but who, most assuredly, did not build himself a forest bower, and annually retire from court and castle, to spend there a lovesick May.

Of absolutely fancied creations are, as we have seen, the “Assemblee of Foules,” and the “Complaint of Mars and Venus,” which the poet overhears a fowl singing on St. Valentine’s Day ere sunrise. “Of the Cuckou and Nightingale:” the poet, between *waking and sleeping*, hears the bird of hate and the bird of music dispute against and for love. When the nightingale takes leave of him he wakes. “The Court of Love.” The poet, at the age of eighteen, is summoned by Mercury to do his obeisance at the Court of Love, “a lile before the Mount of Citheree,” called further on Citheron. He is, on this occasion, not asleep at all, but dreams away like any other poet, with his eyes open, in broad dry-light.

In Chaucer thus we find every kind of possible allegory. There is the thoroughly *creative* allegory, when thoughts are turned into beings, and impersonated abstract ideas appear as deities, and as attendants on deities. This is the unsubstantial allegory, which has, it must be owned, a different meaning to different climes and times. For example, to the belief of the old Greeks, Aphrodite, and Eros, albeit essentially thoughts, had flesh that could be touched, wounded even, and veins in which the blood ran ichor. In the verses of our old poet and his cotemporaries, Venus and Cupid are as active as they were with Homer and Anacreon; only that now their substance has imperceptibly grown attenuate. So that in the “Assemblee of Foules,” for example, those two celestial potentates are upon an equal footing, for subsistence and reality, with the great goddess Dame Nature, who seems to be more of modern than of ancient invention, and with Plesaunce, Arrai, Beautee, Courtesie, Craft, Delite, Gentlenesse, and others enow, whom the poet found in attendance upon the Love-god and his mother. With or without belief, this belongs to all the ages of poetry, from the beginning to the consummation of the world.

Then there is the *disguising* allegory—for by no other appellation can it be described—which may be of a substan-

tial kind. For example, the Black Knight, as we have seen, forlorn in love, builds himself a lodge in the wildwood, to which he resorts during the month of May, and mourns the livelong day under the green boughs. If the conjecture which Tyrwhitt throws out, but without much insisting upon it, that John of Gaunt, wooing his Duchess Blanche, is here figured, this is a *disguising* allegory of the lowest ideal idealization. The conjecture of Tyrwhitt, whether exact or not, quite agrees to the art of poetical invention in that age.

That old and deeply-rooted species of fable, which ascribes to the inferior animals human mind and manners, was another prevalent allegory. Usually, the picture of humanity so conveyed is of a general nature. But if, as has been guessed, the first and noblest of the Three Tercels that woo the "formell eagle," in the Assemblée of Foules, be the same John of Gaunt wooing the same Blanche, here would be two varieties of allegory—the disguising of particular persons and events, and the veiling of human actions and passions under the semblance of the inferior kinds—mixed in this part of the poem, which, inasmuch as it also introduces wholly ideal personages, would, if the key to the enigma has been truly found, very fully exemplify the allegorizing genius of the old poetry.

Certainly, many of the old poems, unless they are interpreted to allude, in this manner, to particular persons and occurrences, appear to want due meaning, such as this Complaint of the nameless Black Knight, this Wooing of the Three Tercels, and the faithless Hawk whom Canace hears. We may often feel ourselves justified in presuming an allusion, although in regard to the true import of the allusion it may be that Time has first locked the door, and then thrown the key over the wall.

Of one Poem, to which we have hitherto but alluded, we feel ourselves now called on to give an analysis, both for sake of its own exquisite beauty and surpassing loveliness, and for sake of Dryden's immortal paraphrase.—THE FLOURE AND THE LEAF.

There is in the plan of "The Floure and the Leaf," a peculiarity which is not easily accounted for. In the other poems of Chaucer, which are thrown into the form of an adventure or occurrence personal to the relater, he relates in person his own experience. Here the parts of experiencing, and of relating an adventure, are both transferred to an

unknown person of the other sex. It is also remarkable that this difference in the personality of the relater does not appear until the very close of the poem, and then incidentally, one of the imaginary persons addressing the relater as "Daughter." In the adventure, which is simply the witnessing a Vision, there is nothing that might not as well have happened to Chaucer himself as to dame or damsel.

In a sweet season of spring, a lady who, for some cause unknown to herself, cannot sleep, rises at the peep of day, and wanders out into a lofty and pleasant grove, where a slender unworn path, not easily seen, leads her to a fair arbour of elaborate workmanship, and so framed as that the siter within sees, unseen, whatsoever passes without; adjoining which is a singularly beautiful medlar-tree in full blossom. A goldfinch leaps from bough to bough, eating buds and blossoms his fill, and then sings most "passing sweetly," and is answered by an unseen nightingale, in a note "so merry" that all the wood rang again. Whilst the lady adventuress sits upon the turfed seat listening, a new burst, as if of angelical voices, is heard. The harmony proceeds from "a world of ladies," who march out from a neighbouring grove, clad in richly-jeweled surcoats of white velvet, each wearing on her head a chaplet of green leaves, laurel, or woodbine, or Agnus Castus. They dance and sing soberly, surrounding one who wears on her head a crown of gold, has a branch of Agnus Castus in her hand, excels them all in beauty, appears to be their queen, and sings a roundel having some allusion to the Green Leaf, and advance, dancing and singing, into a meadow fronting the arbour. The song is not given—its name is in half unintelligible French. Now a thundering of trumpets is heard: and innumerable "men of arms" issue from the grove from which the ladies came. Trumpets, king-of-arms, heralds, and pursuivants clad in white, and wearing chaplets of leaves, ride foremost. Then follow Nine Knights magnificently armed, excepting that on their unhelmed heads are set crowns of laurel. Upon each three henchmen attend, clad in white, with green chaplets, and severally carrying the casque, the shield, and the lance of him they serve. Last, issue a great rout of knights, well-mounted, wearing chaplets, and bearing boughs of oak, laurel, hawthorn, woodbine and other kinds. They joust gallantly for an hour or more: the *laurel-wearers* overbearing all opposition. At last, the whole

company dismount, and move by two and two towards the ladies, who, at their approach, break off song and dance, and go to meet them. Every lady takes a knight by the hand, and in this fashion they pace towards a fair laurel, of such prodigious amplitude as that a hundred persons might rest at ease under the shadow of its diffused branches. All incline with obeisance to the tree; and then sing and dance around it: ever a lady and a knight going together. All these are, (but as is only afterwards at the close made known to the spectators of these occurrences,) as you may easily surmise, the homagers of the Leaf. Now the homagers of the Flower enter upon the stage. From the depth of the wide champaign there come roaming in a great company, ladies and knights, and ever a knight and a lady hand in hand. They are all richly clad in green, and wear chaplets of flowers; green-robed minstrels, with instruments of all sorts, and wearing variegated chaplets of flowers, precede. They dance up to a great tuft of flowers in the midst of the mead; about which they incline reverently, and one sings the praise of the "Margarette" or Daisy, the others answering in chorus; meanwhile the hour grows to noon; the sun waxes hot; the unsheltered flowers wither; the ladies and the knights of the Flower are scorched with his rays; then the wind rises, and furiously blows down all the flowers; then comes on a terrible storm of mixed hail and rain; wets the knights and ladies of the Flower to the skin, and at last blows over. But the white-habited servants of the Leaf have stood under their laurel, shaded from the fiery noon beams, and shrouded from the tempest; and now, moved with rath and pity, come forward to tender their aid. The Queen of the Leaf greets, with loving sisterly compassion, the Queen of the Flower. The party of the Leaf proceed to more effectual relief than soothing words—hewing down boughs and trees to make "stately fires" for drying their wet clothes, and searching the plain for virtuous herbs to make for the blistered and drouthy sufferers salves and salads. She of the Leaf now invites her of the Flower to supper, who accepts as courteously. The Leaf company, at the bidding of their mistress, provide horses for the Flower company. At this juncture the Nightingale, who all day long, sitting hidden in the laurel, sang "the service longing to May," flies to the hand of the Leaf-queen, and sings on as diligently as before—the Goldfinch, whom the heat had

forced from his blossom of "medletree" into the cool bushes, betakes himself in like manner to his Flower-queen's hand, and sings there; and fast by the arbour, where our spectatress has remained all the while seeing and unseen, ladies and knights ride along and away. Only one lady in white rides alone after the rest. To her she comes out, and inquires what the wandering show means. The answer, given with courteous explicitness, imports in sum that those who wear chaplets of *Agnus Castus* are virgins; the laurel wearers, knights who were never conquered; the Nine most distinguished knights being the Nine Worthies; with whom are the Twelve Peers of Charlemagne, and many "knightes olde" of the Garter. Those who wear woodbine

"Be such as never were
To love untrew in word, thoughte, ne dede."

They wear the Leaf, because the beauty of the Leaf lasts. But the followers of the Flower are "those that loved idleness and not delite of no besinesse, but for to hunte and hawke and play in medes, and many other such idle dedes." They wear the perishable Flower accordingly. The informant ends with inquiring of her auditress, whether she will, for the years to come, serve the Leaf or the Flower; who in answer vows her observance to the Leaf. The deep implication of the ancient mythology in the reviving poetry, here again discovers itself. It appears the lady of the Leaf is the goddess Diana; the lady of the Flower, Flora in person.

The invention is remarkably well purposed, and well carried through. The division of the world into those who follow virtue and those who pursue their own delight, is a good general poetico-ethical view, and the delicate emblems happily chosen for expressing the contrast. The heat and the tempest which overwhelm the dainty voluptuaries, and are harmless to the deed-worthy, express the true wisdom of virtue, even for this world, which moves not at our will; and the gentle healing kindness of the wiser to the less wise, whom they equalize with themselves, might almost seem profoundly to signify the recovery to the better wisdom of those who had set out with choosing amiss—a gracious hidden Christian lesson of charity and penitence. The contact of the simply human spectatress with beings brought from the world of imagination, is boldly designed. Here is no Dream. She walks down from her own house into the wood,

and the vision comes and goes, in all the strength of true flesh and blood. The solitariness of her stealing out from her sleepless bed, "about the springing of the day, long or the brighte sonne uprisen was"—therefore, whilst common mankind lie buried in sleep—is all the saving partition that the poet has deigned betwixt the coarse and harsh Real and the splendid Unreal. As for the poetical working-out—the descriptive narrative—it is elaborate and full of beauty. The natural scene is painted with exquisite sensibility to the influences of nature, and with such determinate strokes as show a conversant eye. For example, the mixed and illuminated spring-foliage, the

———"levis new
That sprongin out *agen the sonne shene* :
Some *very rede*, and some a *glad light grene*,"

would seem fresh and vivid from the hand of Coleridge or Tennyson—and the

———"path of *lilil brede*,
——that *gretly had not usid be*,
For it *forgrowin was with gras and wede*,"

—which beguiles the foot of the vision-favoured away from the usual beat of men, leading her into the unvisited sequestration due to the haunting of an embodied Allegory—might, in its old simplicity, pass for well-invented by whichever Priest of Imagination in our day can the best read, in the Sensible, the symbolized Spiritual and Invisible.

You wonder, withal, if Chaucer was the poet, how the spectator was turned into a spectatress; and you are somewhat concerned at finding an unwilling word of the judicious Tyrwhitt's, which owns to a doubt on the authorship of the most beautiful minor poem, admitted into the volume of Chaucer.

Dryden felt the effusion of beauty, and has rendered and enhanced it. One may question the fitness of a material alteration which he has ventured upon. The allegory of the old Poem is pure. Dryden has changed the Knights and Ladies, collectively, into Fairies; for anything that appears, indeed, of good human stature. The thought came to him apparently as making the beauty more beautiful, and possibly as obtaining, to an otherwise indefinite sort of imaginary beings, a known character and a recognized hold upon poetical—succeeding to popular—belief. A contradiction is—that

the company of the Leaf have, in emphatic and chosen terms, been described as **INNUMERABLE**. The laurel is of such enormous diffusion, that **A HUNDRED** persons might repose under it. **Yet it shelters them all from the storm.**

It is also singular to us, that the *Margarete* or *Daisy* should suffer any slight from Chaucer, seeing the reverence with which he elsewhere regards it. It is here, too, no doubt raised into reverence by the observance of the Flower party; but then it suffers disparagement inasmuch as they are disparaged.

Truly does the amiable Godwin say—"In a word, the Poem of Dryden, regarded merely as the exhibition of a soothing and delicious luxuriance of fancy, may be classed with the most successful productions of human genius. No man can read it without astonishment, perhaps not without envy, at the cheerful, well-harmonized, and vigorous state of mind in which the author must have been at the time he wrote it."

"Now turning from the wintry signs, the sun
His course exalted through the Ram had run,
And whirling up the skies, his chariot drove
Through Taurus, and the lightsome realms of love,
Where Venus from her orb descends in showers
To glad the ground, and paint the fields with flowers;
When first the tender blades of grass appear,
And buds, that yet the blast of Eurus fear,
Stand at the door of life, and doubt to clothe the year;
Till gentle heat, and soft repeated rains,
Make the green blood to dance within their veins:
Then, at their call, embolden'd, out they come
And swell the gems, and burst the narrow room;
Broader and broader yet their blooms display,
Salute the welcome sun and entertain the day.
Then from their breathing souls the sweets repair
To scent the skies, and purge the unwholesome air.
Joy spreads the heart, and with a general song,
Spring issues out, and leads the jolly months along.

"In that sweet season, as in bed I lay,
And sought in sleep to pass the night away,
I turn'd my weary side, but still in vain,
Though full of youthful health, and void of pain.
Cares I had none to keep me from my rest,
For love had never enter'd in my breast;
I wanted nothing fortune could supply,
Nor did she slumber till that hour deny.
I wonder'd then, but after found it true,
Much joy had dried away the balmy dew:

Seas would be pools, without the brushing air
To curl the waves, and sure some little care
Should weary nature so, to make her want repair.

“ When Chanticleer the second watch had sung,
Scorning the scorner sleep, from bed I sprung;
And dressing by the moon, in loose array,
Pass'd out in open air, preventing day,
And sought a goodly grove, as fancy led my way.
Straight as a line in beauteous order stood
Of oaks unshorn, a venerable wood;
Fresh was the grass beneath, and every tree,
At distance planted in a due degree,
Their branching arms in air with equal space
Stretch'd to their neighbours with a long embrace;
And the new leaves on every bough was seen,
Some ruddy-colour'd, some of lighter green.
The painted birds companions of the spring,
Hopping from spray to spray, were heard to sing.
Both eyes and ears received a like delight,
Enchanting music and a charming sight.
On Philomel I fix'd my whole desire,
And listen'd for the queen of all the quire;
Fain would I hear her heavenly voice to sing,
And wanted yet an omen to the spring.

“ Attending long in vain, I took the way,
Which through a path, but scarcely printed, lay;
In narrow mazes oft it seem'd to meet,
And look'd as lightly press'd by fairy feet.
Wand'ring I walk'd alone, for still methought
To some strange end so strange a path was wrought;
At last it led me where an arbour stood,
The sacred receptacle of the wood;
This place unmark'd, though oft I walk'd the green,
In all my progress I had never seen;
And seized at once with wonder and delight,
Gazed all around me, new to the transporting sight.
'Twas bench'd with turf, and goodly to be seen,
The thick young grass arose in fresher green:
The mound was newly made, no sight could pass
Betwixt the nice partitions of the grass;
The well-united sods so closely lay,
And all around the shades defended it from day;
For sycamores with eglantine were spread,
A hedge about the sides, a covering over head.
And so the fragrant briar was wove between,
The sycamore and flowers were mix'd with green;
That nature seem'd to vary the delight,
And satisfied at once the smell and sight.
The master workman of the bower was known
Through fairylands, and built for Oberon;

Who twining leaves with such proportion drew,
 They rose by measure, and by rule they grew ;
 No mortal tongue can half the beauty tell,
 For none but hands divine could work so well.
 Both roof and sides were like a parlour made,
 A soft recess, and a cool summer shade.
 The hedge was set so thick no foreign eye
 The persons placed within it could espy ;
 But all that pass'd without with ease was seen,
 As if nor fence nor tree was placed between.
 'Twas border'd with a field; and some was plain
 With grass, and some was sow'd with rising grain,
 That (sow the dew with spangles deck'd the ground)
 A sweeter spot of earth was never found.
 I look'd, and look'd, and still with new delight,
 Such joy my soul, such pleasures fill'd my sight;
 And the fresh eglantine exhaled a breath,
 Whose odours were of power to raise from death.
 Nor sullen discontent, nor anxious care,
 Even though brought thither, could inhabit there ;
 But thence they fled as from their mortal foe ;
 For this sweet place could only pleasure know.
 Thus as I mused I cast aside my eye,
 And saw a medlar-tree was planted nigh.
 The spreading branches made a goodly show,
 And full of opening blooms was every bough :
 A goldfinch there I saw with gaudy pride
 Of painted plumes, that hopp'd from side to side,
 Still pecking as she pass'd ; and still she drew
 The sweets from every flower, and suck'd the dew.
 Sufficed at length she warbled in her throat,
 And tuned her voice to many a merry note,
 But indistinct, and neither sweet nor clear,
 Yet such as sooth'd my soul and pleased my ear.
 " Her short performance was no sooner tried,
 When she I sought, the nightingale, replied :
 So sweet, so shrill, so variously she sung,
 That the grove echo'd and the valleys rung ;
 And I so ravish'd with her heavenly note—
 I stood entranced, and had no room for thought,
 But all o'erpower'd with ecstasy of bliss,
 Was in a pleasing dream of Paradise ;
 At length I waked, and looking round the bower,
 Search'd every tree, and pry'd on every flower,
 If anywhere by chance I might espy
 The rural poet of the melody ;
 For still methought she sung not far away :
 At last I found her on a laural spray,
 Close by my side she sate, and fair in sight,
 Full in a line against her opposite

Where stood with eglantine the laurel twined,
And both their native sweets were well conjoin'd.
"On the green bank I sat, and listen'd long
(Sitting was more convenient for the song):
Not till her lay was ended could I move,
But wish'd to dwell forever in the grove
Only methought the time too swiftly pass'd,
And every note I feared would be the last.
My sight, my smell, and hearing were employ'd,
And all three senses in full gust enjoy'd,
And what alone did all the rest surpass,
The sweet possession of the fairy place;
Single, and conscious to myself alone,
Of pleasures to the excluded world unknown;
Pleasures which nowhere else were to be found,
And all Elysium in a spot of ground."

The Lake poets—Heaven bless them!—have one and all
—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey—loudly and angrily
denied to Dryden a poetical eye for nature, quoting in proof
some inflated passage or another from his rhyming plays.
Pope, too, according to them, was blind, and had never seen
the moon and stars. Where, we ask, in all the poetry of the
Lakes and Tarns, is there such a strain—so rich and so sus-
tained—as that yet ringing in your ears? And "the ancient
woman seated on Helmcrag" answers—"where?" True, the
imagery is all in Chaucer. But had not Dryden's heart
"rejoiced in nature's joy," not thus could he have caught the
spirit of his master. Ay—the spirit; for there it is, in spite of
the difference of manner—transfused without evaporation or
other loss, from the "rhime roial" in which Chaucer rejoiced,
into the couplet in which Dryden, in his old age, moved like
a giant refreshed with gulps of the dewy morn. Again:—

"The ladies left their measures at the sight,
To meet the chiefs returning from the fight,
And each with open arms embraced her chosen knight.
Amid the plain a spreading laurel stood,
The grace and ornament of all the wood;
That pleasing shade they sought, a soft retreat
From sudden April showers, a shelter from the heat,
Her leafy arms with such extent were spread,
So near the clouds was her aspiring head,
That hosts of birds, that wing the liquid air,
Perch'd in the boughs, had nightly lodging there:
And flocks of sheep beneath the shade from far
Might hear the rattling hail, and wintry war;
From heaven's inclemency here found retreat,
Enjoy'd the cool, and shunn'd the scorching heat;

A hundred knights might there at ease abide,
 And every knight a lady by his side:
 The trunk itself such odours did bequeath
 That a Moluccan breeze to these was common breath.
 The lords and ladies here, approaching, paid
 Their homage, with a low obeisance made,
 And seem'd to venerate the sacred shade.

These rites perform'd, their pleasures they pursue,
 With songs of love, and mix with measures new:
 Around the holy tree their dance they frame,
 And ev'ry champion leads his chosen dame.

"I cast my sight upon the farther field,
 And a fresh object of delight beheld.

For from the region of the west I heard
 New music sound, and a new troop appear'd.
 Of knights and ladies mix'd, a jolly band,
 But all on foot they march'd, and hand in hand.

"The ladies dressed in rich symars were seen,
 Of Florence satin, flower'd with white and green,
 And for a shade betwixt the bloomy gridelin,
 The borders of their petticoats below
 Were guarded thick with rubies in a row;
 And every damsel wore-upon her head
 Of flowers a garland blended white and red.
 Attired in mantles all the knights were seen,
 That gratified the view with cheerful green:
 Their chaplets of their ladies' colours were,
 Composed of white and red, to shade their shining hair.
 Before the merry troupe the minstrels play'd,
 All in their masters' liveries were array'd

And clad in green, and on their temples wore
 The chaplets white and red their ladies bore.
 Their instruments were various in their kind,
 Some for the bow, and some for breathing wind;
 The sawtry, pipe and hautboy's noisy band,
 And the soft lute trembling beneath the touching hand.

A tuft of daisies on a flowery lea
 They saw, and thitherward they bent their way;
 To this both knights and dames their homage made,
 And due obeisance to the daisy paid.

And then the band of flutes began to play,
 To which a lady sang a virelay;
 And still at every close she would repeat
 The burden of the song, *The daisy is so sweet.*

The daisy is so sweet, when she begun
 The troop of knights and dames continued on.
 The concert and the voice so charm'd my ear,
 And sooth'd my soul, that it was heaven to hear."

O bardlings of Young England! withhold, we beseech you,
 from winsome *Maga*, your verse-offerings, while thus the

sons of song, evoked from the visionary land, coming and going like shadows, smile to let drop at her feet the scrolls of their inspiration. Poetry, indeed! "You lisp in numbers, for the numbers come." But in big boobies a lisp is only less loathsome than a burr. Some of you have both, and therefore deserve to die. Readers beloved! prefer you not such sweet, strong strains as these, sounded by Dryden, when he had nearly counted threescore and ten? "Yet was not his natural force abated"—while his sense of beauty, instructed and refined by meditations that deepen amongst life's evening shades, became holier within sight of the grave. You will thank us for another quotation; for much do we fear, O lady fair! that thou hast no copy of Dryden in thy *boudoir*, and yet life is fast flowing on with thee, for thou art—nay, there's no denying—yea, thou art—in thy twentieth year—and if you continue to refuse our advice—will soon be an old woman.

"The Lady of the Leaf ordain'd a feast,
And made the Lady of the Flower her guest:
When lo! a bower ascended on the plain,
With sudden seats adorn'd, and large for either train.
This bower was near my pleasant arbour placed,
That I could hear and see whatever pass'd:
The ladies sat with each a knight between,
Distinguished by their colours, white and green;
The vanquish'd party with the victors join'd,
Nor wanted sweet discourse, the banquet of the mind.
Meantime the minstrels play'd on either side,
Vain of their art, and for the mastery vied.
The sweet contention lasted for an hour,
And reach'd my secret arbour from the bower.
The sun was set: and Vesper, to supply
His absent beams, had lighted up the sky:
When Philomel, officious all the day
To sing the service of th' ensuing May,
Fled from her laurel shade, and wing'd her flight
Directly to the queen array'd in white;
And hopping, sat familiar on her hand,
A new musician, and increased the band.

"The goldfinch, who, to shun the scalding heat,
Had changed the medlar for a safer seat,
And hid in bushes 'scaped the bitter shower,
Now perch'd upon the Lady of the Flower;
And either songster holding out their throats,
And folding up their wings, renew'd their notes;
As if all day, preluding to the fight,
They only had rehearsed to sing by night.
The banquet ended, and the battle done,
They danced by starlight and the friendly moon;

And when they were to part, the laureat queen
 Supplied with steeds the lady of the green,
 Her and her train conducting on the way,
 The moon to follow, and avoid the day."

Whatsoever merit of thought or of poetry may be found in the poems of which we have spoken, the world has rightly considered the *CANTERBURY TALES* as the work by which Chaucer is to be judged. In truth, common renown forgets all the rest; and it is by the *Canterbury Tales* only that he can properly be said to be known to his countrymen. Here it is that he appears as possessing the versatility of poetical power which ranges from the sublime, through the romantic and the pathetic, to the rudest mirth—choosing subjects the most various, and treating all alike adequately. Here he discovers himself as the shrewd and curious observer, and close painter of manners. Here he writes as one surveying the world of man with enlarged and philosophical intuition, weighing good and evil in even scale. Here, more than in any other, he is master of his matter, disposing it at his discretion, and not carried away with or mastered by it. Here he is master, too, of his English, thriftily culling the fit word, not effusing a too exuberant stream of description. Here he has acquired his own art and his own style of versification, which is here to be studied accordingly. Well, therefore, and wisely, did Tyrwhitt judge, when, undertaking to rescue the "mirrour of Rethoures alle" from the dust and rust of injurious time, he laid out his long and hard, but not uncheerful labour, upon the *Canterbury Tales* alone.

Every soul alive knows something of them—but not very many more than Stothard, in his celebrated *Picture*, has informed their eye withal. Their plan ranks them among works which are numerous, early and late, but which rather belong to early literature. East and West such are to be found, but they belong rather to the Oriental genius. A slender narrative, the container of weightier ones—a technical contrivance, which gave to a number of slighter compositions, collectively taken, the importance of a greater work—which prolonged to the tale-teller who had once gained the ear of his auditory his right of audience—and which, in a world where the tongue was more active in the diffusion of literature than the quill, afforded to each involved tale a memorial niche that might save it from dropping entirely away into oblivion.

To Chaucer, the scheme serves a higher purpose of art,

which of itself allies him to the higher poets. By it he is enabled to comprehend, as if in one picture, a more diversified and complete representation of humanity. The thought is genial and sprightly. A troop of riders, who have been stirred severally from their firesides by the searching spirit of spring, have casually fallen into company, and who pace along, breathing an air which "sweet showers" have embalmed—exhilarated by the brightening radiance of "the young sun," and made loquacious by the very power which pours out the song of the glad birds from the newly-leaved boughs by the long wayside.

And who are the riders? And what is the charm that has drawn together a company of thirty to ride on the same road at the same hour of the same day? The suddenly-spun band of a union that will be as hastily dissolved, squares happily with the large purpose of the poet, by unforcedly bringing together persons of both sexes, and of exceedingly diverse conditions, high, low, learned, unlearned, military, civil, religious, from city and from country, land and sea, of unlike occupations, buoyant with youth, grave with years. The momentary tie has poetical vitality, from the fact that it is borrowed from the heart of the time and of England. They are Pilgrims from all quarters to the shrine of England's illustrious and favourite Saint, the Martyr of Canterbury. They have gradually mustered into cavalcade in coming up from the shires to the metropolis, one excepted—the Poet. He falls into their party, by the hap of sleeping the night preceding the journey out from the capital at the same inn, in the suburb towards Canterbury—Southwark.

The specific incitement of the Tale-telling is thus invented in a natural spirit, and aptly to the vivacity of the whole conception. Mine host of the Tabard, Henry Bailey, a hearty fellow, no doubt, since Chaucer has thought his name worthy of his immortalizing, contrives the proceeding, and this half in good fellowship, and half in the way of his trade. To shorten the tediousness of the road, he proposes that each of them shall tell, on the way to Canterbury, one tale; and on the way back, another—or, for here the poem a little disagrees with itself, two tales going and two returning; and that he or she who tells the best tale shall have, on their return, a supper, for which all the others shall pay, and which, of course, he, Henry Bailey, shall provide. Upon these terms he will, without fee, perform the part of their conductor to Canterbury.

and back again. In assenting, the Pilgrims constitute him the judge of the tales: and thus mine host, with his joyous temper, courtesy, where courtesy needs, worldly sense, rough, sharp, and ready wit, and unappealable dictatorship in all matters of the commonwealth, becomes a dramatic person of the very first consequence, the animating soul of the poetical action; and who, continually stepping in between the finishing of one tale and the beginning of the next, organically links together the otherwise disunited and incomposite Series.

The General Prologue contains, as was unavoidable, besides the scheme of the poem, the description of the several Pilgrims, and constitutes in itself, by the versatile feeling with which the portraits are seized, by the strength, precision, peculiarity, liveliness, rapidity, and number of the strokes with which each is individualized—a masterpiece of poetical painting. One lost generation of Old England moves before us in the warmth and hues of life.

The Knight, his son the Squire, his servant the good Yeoman—a gallant three—the Clerke of Oxenford the “povre Person of a toun,” and his brother the Ploughman, are, each in his estate, of thorough worthiness, and are all, accordingly, drawn in a spirit of full affection. The Prioress and the Franklin are laughed at a little—she for the pains she gives herself to display her *imitative* high breeding, and for—only think it!—A. D. 1489—her *SENTIMENTALITY*!—he for his love of a plenteously-spread board, and for his “poignant sauces!” But the two are good at heart; and the satire of the poet leaves to them undisturbed their place in your good esteem. His other men of some condition—the Monk, the Friar, the “Sergeant of the Lawe,” the Merchant, the “Doctour of Physike”—he lashes with a more vigorous wrist. But not like a farce-monger, who, to gain your laugh, must utterly abase his characters, and make them merely ridiculous. The hunting Monk wants nothing but his hood off to be a distinguished country squire. He is “*a manly man* to be an abbot able!” and if he keeps greyhounds, they are “as swift as fowl of flight.” And look but at his horse’s points and condition! The rascal of a “Frere,” if, by his perseverance and persuasiveness in begging, he impoverishes the country, is a noble post of his order, and well beloved and familiar with franklins, and with worthy women. The Merchant has an assumed air of importance—magnifies his gains—thinks the protection of the sea betwixt the ports from which his

vessels run the first duty of civilized governments—and keeps his wit set upon the main chance. But that is the worst of him—"For sothe he was a *worthy man* withalle." The Lawyer is at the top of his profession—wise, witty, perfect in statutes and in precedents, high in honours. What are his faults? You can hardly tell. There is a slight ostentation of wisdom. He has got a deal of money together—he is full of business—but he "*seems* yet busier then he is." The Doctor, too, is an excellent physician. He calls the stars in to his aid. But that may be Chaucer's belief, not his mirth. He knows the disease, and has the remedy at command. To be sure, he and his apothecaries understand one another. He is learned in a thousand books; but not in *THE BOOK*. Gold is of high esteem in medicine as a cordial. Therefore he loves gold.

Why go on? Like Shakspeare, Chaucer portrays men in a spirit of humanity. He paints his fellows; and, if he is amused with our follies, he prefers showing the fairer side of our nature. Even the merry, warm-blooded Wife of Bath, with her five wedded husbands, earns some good will of us by her joyous and invincible spirit. Imagine the daring, the vigour, and the stirring wit of the west-country cloth-manufacturess, who cannot rest easy till she has been three times in pilgrimage to Jerusalem!

There is a visible purpose of keeping up the RESPECTABILITY of the company. If the MILLER, the COKE, the REVE, and the SOMPNOUR, stand on a somewhat low step of the social stair—the HABERDASHER, the CARPENTER, the WEBBE, (Weaver,) the DYER and the TAPISER—who are lumped in the poet's description—

" Were al yclothed in ye liverce,
Of a solemne and gret fraternitee.

Wel semed ech of hem a fayr burgeis,
To sitten in a gild halle, ON THE DEIS."

They are of wisdom qualifying them to stand for Aldermen of their wards. Their wives are "ycleped Madame"—take precedency in going to vigils—and have

—" A mantel reallich (i. e. royally) yborne."

Even our honest friend the Southwark innkeeper, Henry Bailey, has an air of dignity thrown over him. He was

"A semely man—
 For to have ben a marshal in an halle.
 A large man he was, with eyen stepe,*
 A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe.
 Bold of his speche, and wise and wel ytaught,
 And of manhood him lacked righte nought."

Moreover, even that chief of the poetical Taverns, the TARD, is designated as

"This gentil hostelrye."

No wonder ! since

"The chambres and the stables weren wide,
 And wel we weren eed ATTE BESTE."

The Tales ara, in some respect, like an extension of the Prologue. They carry out the characters, or the spirit of the characters, there drawn. Thus, if the chivalry of the time is impersonated, in respect of its valour, honour, and courteous demeanour, in the Knight, in his Tale it mounts into poetical aspiration, and shines out in regal splendour. The contrast, due to the different years of the father and the son, is in part disappointed by the cross destiny which has

———"left half-told
 The story of Cambuscan bold."

The youthful fancy, dipped or drenched in romance of the twenty-year old Squire, shows itself, indeed, in the two sections which we have of his chivalrous narrative. The Sword, which with its edge hews through all armour, and with its "plat" heals the else incurable wounds of its own inflicting—the Mirror, which discloses the plotting of the kingdom's enemies, the truth or disloyalty of a distant lover—the Ring, which enables its wearer to understand the "leden" of all birds, and to answer them in the same—and the marvelous Horse of Brass, which, with turning of a pin, and with a whisper in the ear, carries his rider whither he would through the air, vanishes and comes with a wish, and, furthermore, behaves and comports himself wholly after the best fashion of a horse ;—these four gifts from the King of Arabie and Inde to the Tartar king and his daughter, transport us, as with a

* The Monk, too, has this characteristic, which is of dubious exposition. Tyrwhitt thinks that the meaning may be—"Eyes sunk deep in the head." Certainly a feature giving force and distinction to the physiognomy has been intended.

flight of the magical courser himself, into the deep, wild, and mystical heart of that region, unplaced by geographers, explored by the host of dreamers, Romance. So, the love-story of the forsaken Bird, with whom the Ring brings the Princess acquainted, is Eastern, is amorous, is high-fantastical, fit for the "lover and lusty bachelor," who

—"Coude songes make, and well indite,
Juste and eke dance"—

and stands off in complete distinction from the love-debate, with argumentation and with arms, of Palamon and Arcite. What is it, then, that we would have more? Truly, we fear that for once we are half unreasonable. The Tale, with beginning, middle, and end, to satisfy the heart of Aristotle, in the Knight's mouth—and the finely-begun fragment in the Squire's—are, by their temper, allied and opposed, quite up to the dramatic propriety of the two speakers. What would we have more? Simply this, that Chaucer, by carrying to an end the unfinished fiction in the tone in which he has begun it, should have demonstrated himself the master of his art, which, by his project, he seems to be. The Knight's is a love-tale, as well; but there is, in the love-story, an involving of political interests, which, together with the known historical names, or such as are so reputed, tempers the romantic, confers a gravity, and mixes in a tone of the world's business that suits the sedate reason, and the various observation of the veteran warrior, tried in high services. It would have been a pleasant feat of poetical understanding and skill, especially for that unpractised day, if a second equally gallant recital of love and war—long and complex it would, by the intimations thrown out, have been—could have been pursued throughout its natural evolutions and vicissitudes, as resolutely as thus far it is, upon its own meet self-sustained wing. It would have been! Oh, vex not the shade of the true Maker with saucy doubts and fears! "Call up Him!" Yes—were there evocations of such potency; but "call Him" in the simplicity of your soul, because he has moved in you the lawful desire of hearing—because you long, insatiably, to know what was done, found, suffered, enjoyed, by Cambalo, Algarsif, Canace: which none other segger, disour, maker, harper and carper, that shall ever arise shall have wit to tell you—not because you would fain sit in the chair of criticism, awarding or withholding the palm of dramatic skill, claimed

by Dan Geffrey. Ay! "call up Him!" But call up no substitute for Him.

The Sergeant of Law's Tale, and the Clerke of Oxenford's, have an affinity. Each describes a tried wife, an exemplar for all her sex, two perfectly pure-souled women. And nothing is more honourable to Chaucer than the love with which he has dwelt upon the story of both. Both suffer to extremity; but Custance, the Sergeant's heroine, under the hand of Providence, who proves her with strange calamities, and when she has well-endured the ordeal, restores her to deserved happiness. For the loving wife, whom the Clerke of Oxenford praises, a loving husband is pleased to devise a course of sharp assaying, which might have been conveniently spared. The manner of telling in the two stories is marked with a difference. In both it is somewhat of the copious kind; and it may be observed, generally, that the style of the narrative, in the seven-lined stanza, or "rime roiall," is more diffuse than in the couplets. There is a difference between the two which appears to belong to the characters of the speakers. The man of Law has not a few passages of exclamatory and apostrophical moral and sentimental rhetoric. They compel you to recollect his portrait—

"Discret he was, and of gret reverence
He seemed swiche, his wordes were so wise."

The Clerk has nothing of the kind. The largeness in his manner of relating, is rather an explicit and lucid fullness in representing an interesting subject, than what is properly called diffuseness. Chaucer has said of him—

"Not a word spake he more than was nede;"

and you will see, accordingly, that although he *details* his narrative, every word, in its place, is pertinent and serviceable. He ends with a freak, which carries him, you are disposed to think, out of his character. He has related, after Petrarch, the story of patient Griseldis, with beautiful earnestness and simplicity. He has conducted her through all the trials which the high-born lord thought good to lay upon the low-born wife, has displayed and rewarded her inimitable "wifly pacience," and then confesses, that not being imitable, neither is it intended that it should be imitated. In short, he "stints of earnestful matere;" and to "gladen" his audience, ends with "saying them a song," in six quaintly-rhymed

stanzas, in which he counsels the wives to stand upon the defensive against their husbands, and take all natural care of themselves—

“Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
And let *him* care, and wepe, and wringe, and wail.”

The ironical counsel does not belie the moral of the story; but it comes unexpectedly from him whom the Hostess has called upon for his tale, with remarking, that he “rides as still and coy as a maid newly espoused sits at her bord.”

The Franklin has at home a graceless cub and heir of his own. If good living were one and the same thing with holy living, this should the less easily have happened. The Franklin is wonderfully captivated with our young Squire's breeding, grace, and eloquence. The contrast brings his own “burdane” painful into his mind, and wrings from him a mortified exclamation. The old man, with his sanguine complexion, and his beard

“White as is the dayesie,”

has—notwithstanding the sharp censorship which he exercises over his cook—a heart in his bosom. The pleasure with which he has heard the Squire, vouches as much; and more decisively so does the story, which he himself tells from the old Breton lays; another story of a virtuous wife, strangely tried, of all the three the most strangely. Her husband, a knight, is on a voyage, and she takes a horror of the perilous rocks that edge their own shore. Meanwhile, a youthful squire pursues her with love. One day, in a mockery, she promises to grant him his suit if he will remove all the rocks in a morning. After some perplexity of thought he resorts to an able magician at Orleans, who, for the consideration of a thousand pounds, undertakes, and accomplishes the feat. Who is now hard bestead, but the lady? She, in her strait, consults her husband, who has returned; and the honourable husband says—you must keep your word. The squire comes for his guerdon. “My husband says that I must keep my word.” “Indeed!—and shall a squire not know how to do a “gentil dede,” as well as a knight? I release you your promise.”—He carries £500—all of the agreed sum that he can muster—to the conjurer, and prays of him time for the rest. “Have I performed my undertaking?” “Yes!”—“And the lady hers?”—The squire is obliged to relate the sequence of events.—“And is a clerk,” exclaims the master, “less able

to do a gentil dede, than squire and knight? Keep thy money, Sir Squire!"

That is a creditable tale for a country gentleman—

"Whose table dormant in the halle alway
Stood redy covered alle the longe day."

There is much feeling in the detail of the story, and the magical shows by which the enchanter, before striking his bargain, demonstrates his competency, and by which he afterwards executes his engagement, are dressed out with vivid imagination.

But now it is really high time that you should hear Dryden on Chaucer. For is not this Number IV of our Specimens of the British Critics?

"With Ovid ended the golden age of the Roman tongue; from Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. The manners of the poets were not unlike: both of them were well bred, well natured, amorous, and libertine, at least in their writings: it may be also in their lives. Their studies were the same—philosophy and philology. Both of them were knowing in astronomy; of which Ovid's *Books of the Roman Feasts*, and Chaucer's *Treatise of the Astrolabe*, are sufficient witnesses. But Chaucer was likewise an astrologer, as were Virgil, Horace, Persius, and Manilius. Both writ with wonderful facility and clearness; neither were great inventors; for Ovid only copied the Grecian fables, and most of Chaucer's stories were taken from his Italian cotemporaries, or their predecessors—Boccace his 'Decameron' was first published; and from thence our Englishman has borrowed many of his 'Canterbury Tales.' Yet that of *Palamon and Arcite* was written, in all probability, by some Italian wit, in a former age, as I shall prove hereafter. The tale of *Grisilde* was the invention of Petrarch; by him sent to Boccace, from whom it came to Chaucer. *Troilus and Cressida* was also written by a Lombard author, but much amplified by our English translator, as well as beautified; the genius of our countrymen, in general, being rather to improve an invention than to invent themselves, as is evident not only in our poetry but in many of our manufactures. I find I have anticipated already, and taken up from Boccace before I come to him; but there is so much less behind; and I am of the temper of most kings, who love to be in debt, are all for present money, no matter how they pay it afterwards; besides,

the nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it. This I have learned from the practice of honest Montaigne, and return at my pleasure to Ovid and Chaucer, of whom I have little more to say. Both of them built on the inventions of other men; yet since Chaucer had something of his own, as *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Clock and the Fox*, which I have translated, and some others, I may justly give our countryman the precedence in that part; since I can remember nothing of Ovid which was wholly his. Both of them understood the manners: under which name I comprehend the passions, and in a larger sense the descriptions of persons, and their very habits. For an example, I see Baucis and Philemon as perfectly before me as if some ancient painter had drawn them; and all the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, their humours, their features, and their very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard, in Southwark. Yet even there, too, the figures of Chaucer are much more lively, and set in a better light; which, though I have not time to prove, yet I appeal to the reader, and am sure he will clear me from partiality. The thoughts and words remain to be considered in the comparison of the two poets, and I have saved myself one-half of that labour by owning that Ovid lived when the Roman tongue was in its meridian; Chaucer, in the dawning of our language; therefore, that part of the comparison stands not on an equal foot, any more than the diction of Ennius and Ovid, or of Chaucer and our present English. The words are given up, as a post not to be defended in our poet, because he wanted the modern art of fortifying. The thoughts remain to be considered; and they are to be measured only by their propriety; that is, as they flow more or less naturally from the persons described on such and such occasions. The vulgar judges, which are nine parts in ten of all nations, who call conceits and jingles wit, who see Ovid full of them, and Chaucer altogether without them, will think me little less than mad, for preferring the Englishman to the Roman. Yet, with their leave, I must presume to say, that the things they admire are only glittering trifles, and so far from being witty, that in a serious poem they are nauseous, because they are unnatural. Would any man who is ready to die for love, describe his passions like Narcissus; would he think of *inopem me copia fecit*, and a dozen more of such expressions, poured on the neck of one another, and signifying all the same thing? This is just

John Littlewit, in 'Bartholomew Fair,' who had a conceit (as he tells you) left him in his misery : a miserable conceit. On these occasions, the poet should endeavour to raise pity ; but, instead of this, Ovid is tickling you to laugh. Virgil never made use of such machines when he was moving you to commiserate the death of Dido ; he would not destroy what he was building. Chaucer makes Arcite violent in his love, and unjust in the pursuit of it ; yet when he came to die, he made him think more reasonably : he repents not of his love, for that had altered his character ; but acknowledges the injustice of his proceedings, and resigns Emelie to Palamon. What would Ovid have done on this occasion ? He would certainly have made Arcite witty on his death-bed ;—he had complained he was farther off from possession by being so near, and a thousand such boyisms, which Chaucer rejected as below the dignity of the subject. They who think otherwise, would by the same reason prefer Lucan and Ovid to Homer and Virgil, and Martial to all four of them. As for the turn of words, in which Ovid particularly excels all poets, they are sometimes a fault, and sometimes a beauty, as they are used properly or improperly ; but in strong passions always to be shunned, because passions are serious, and will admit no playing. The French have a high value for them ; and I confess they are often what they call delicate, when they are introduced with judgment ; but Chaucer writ with more simplicity, and followed nature more closely, than to use them. I have thus far, to the best of my knowledge, been an upright judge betwixt the parties in competition, not meddling with the design nor the disposition of it ; because the design was not their own ; and in the disposing of it they were equal. It remains that I say something of Chaucer in particular.

"In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense ; learned in all sciences, and therefore speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off ; a continence which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients excepting Virgil and Horace. One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way ; but swept like a drag-net great and small. There was plenty enough, but the dishes

were ill sorted ; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. All this proceeded, not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment. Neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets, but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing ; and perhaps knew it was a fault, but hoped the reader would not find it. For this reason, though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer ; and for ten impressions which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth ; for, as my last Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, ‘Not being of God, he could not stand.’

“Chaucer followed nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her ; and there is a great difference of being *poeta* and *nimis poeta*, if we may believe Catullus, as much as betwixt a modest behaviour and affectation. * * *

“He must have been a man of most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we may now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other ; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity ; their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding ; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous ; some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different ; the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady Prioress, and the broad-speaking gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this ; there is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God’s plenty.

We have our forefathers and great granddames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days ; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of monks, and friars, and canons, and lady-abbesses, and nuns ; for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered. May I have leave to do myself the justice (since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet, that they will not allow me so much as to be a Christian, or a moral man) may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader that I have confined my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savour nothing of immodesty. If I had desired more to please than to instruct, the Reeve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Merchant, the Sumner, and, above all, the Wife of Bath, in the prologue to her tale, would have procured me as many friends and readers as there are beaux and ladies of pleasure in the town. But I will no more offend against good manners. I am sensible, as I ought to be, of the scandal I have given by my loose writings ; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgment. If anything of this nature, or of profaneness be crept into these poems, I am so far from defending it, that I disown it, *totum hoc indictum volo*. Chaucer makes another manner of apology for his broad speaking, and Boccace makes the like ; but I will follow neither of them."

An English reader is likely to have held his way through the Palamon and Arcite of Dryden, ere arriving at the Knight's Tale of Chaucer. It will not easily happen that he overleaps that Version, so full of the fire and vigorous grace which he delights in, and couched in the very choicest of that English on which his ears habitually feed, to introduce himself all at once to the antique and to him obsolete Original. The pure impression, therefore, with which he would read the Tale in its proper place, if he there first got acquainted with it, is hardly to be obtained. No matter ! Forget Dryden, and plunge yourself into Chaucer.

Be surprised, if you can, as you surely will be amused, at encountering the inextricable commixture of manners, usages, tones, thinkings, and speakings, which time and space have done their best at keeping asunder—the chivalry of modern Europe, and of the middle ages, transplanted into the heroic age of old Greece, and to the Court of Theseus, "Duk of Athenes." Be surprised and amused, but do not therefore

lay the book out of your hand, or laugh the old master to scorn, or do him other than reverent and honourable justice. Take rather the story to pieces, convince yourself step by step how strangely at every turn the old world and the new, the Christian and the Heathen, are confounded together, and feel at every step how the vitality which the good poet has infused into his work, reconciles and atones discordancies and discrepancies; and in spite of the perplexing physiognomy, how that must needs be one body which is informed and actuated, through all its joints and members, by one spirit.

Take in pieces the story—untwist the intertwined classical and romantic threads. Make sure of the fault, and then hasten to forgive it. The fault! Are you quite sure that it is one? Recollect that it is not Chaucer who relates the Knight's Tale. Chaucer is here a dramatic poet, and his Knight relates his own tale. What!—Shall he, who has “full often time the bord begun,”—

“Aboven allé nationns in Prace;”

who has “reyseed in Lettowe, and in Ruce,” has been—

“In Gernade at the siege
Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie;”

who was—

“At Leyes and at Satalie,
When they were wonne; and in the Grete See,
At many a noble armee;”—

he who has been at—

“Mortal batailles fiftene,
And foughten for our faith at Tramisene,
In listes thries, and ay slain his fo”—

shall he, upon the qualm of a queasy criticism, not be allowed to transfer something of the

“Chevalrie,
Truth and honour, freedom and courtesie,”

which, “from the time that he first began to riden out,” he has loved—across a gap of a few hundred leagues and years? To what end else, it may be asked, has he approved himself, “full worthy in his lordes werre,” and “ridden thereto no man-ferre,”—

“As well in Christendom as in Hethenesse,
And ever honour'd for his worthinesse!”

Why, the Knight would have been no knight at all if he had been Richard Bentley or John Milton, and not, as there is every reason to hope he was, *le noble et vaillant Chivalier MATHEU DE GOURNEY*, whose marble tells us that he had fought at Benamaryn and Algezire, and been at abundance of battles and sieges, named and unnamed, in Christendom and Heathenesse—"en les quex il gaigna noblement grant los et honour"—and who "died in 1406 at the age of 96." It is therefore Sir Matheu de Gourney who speaks, like a knight, of knighthood—and let him speak—

"Who never yet no villanie ne sayde,
In all his life unto no manere wight."

Let him speak, justifying his eulogist, and showing us, as well as may be, by his words, what his deeds showed the world, that—

"He was a veray parfit gentil knight!"

The first transaction that is related with some full process, is the chivalrous enterprise of Theseus against Creon, King of Thebes. This dispiteous and abominable tyrant prohibits the bodies of the warriors fallen in the celebrated siege of that city from burial. The widows of the slain princes and nobles move Theseus for vengeance and redress, which he instantly undertakes, and forthwith executes. And now mark the admixture of times and manners. In the first place, the heinousness of the crime, and even the imagination of such an impiety, are purely antique, as, in truth, the fact itself is on classical record in the "Antigone" of Sophocles. Again, the suppliant, bereaved, and wobegone wives have awaited Theseus's coming "in the temple of the goddess Clemency," than which nothing can be more classical; and the manner in which, at his return home from his victorious war upon the "Amasones," the sorrowful company receive him, kneeling by two and two, clothed in black, along the highway, might persuade you that Sir Matheu had read the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, and successfully imitated *Œdipus's* dolorous and picturesque reception in the streets of Thebes, by the kneeling, plague-smitten population of the city.

On the other hand, the claim of redress at the hand of the warrior carries your imagination to the interesting volumes of St. Palaye; and clearly refers to the obligation by which the knight, at his investiture, bound himself to redress all wrongs,

especially those of the ladies. And Theseus is nothing slack in acknowledging the obligation. He dismounts, takes them each and all up in his arms,

“And swore his oath, *as he was trewe knight*,”

that he will do his endeavour that the world shall applaud the chastising of the “false king.”—Again, when the one day’s demolishing fight has given Creon to death, and his land into Theseus’s hand, and the two right Heroes of the Tale, the Theban cousins, Palamon and Arcite, are dragged out, half-alive and half-dead, from the heap of the slain, the “heralds” know them, by the “cote-armoure,” to be of the blood-royal. Of course, they are designated “knights.”—Again: Theseus will take no ransom for them. That is, perhaps, indifferently, ancient or modern; but it sounds to our ears rather modern, that he shuts them up in a high tower, which overlooks the Garden of his Palace.

But now we plunge into the bosom of our own Heroic times. To do observance to the May is a rite that we find continually occurring in the poetry of the middle ages. It is on May morning that Emelie, going into the garden to gather flowers, and wreath for herself a coronel, is first seen by the two captive Theban kinsmen. Again, when Arcite, liberated by the intervention of Pirithous, has returned, and is living unrecognized in the service of Theseus, it is precisely upon the same occasion of going into the wood to gather “grenes” for May morning, that he falls in with Palamon, who has the night before broken prison, and hides himself during the day in the forest—which encounter leads to their set encounter in arms the next day, and so to the interruption of their duel by Theseus himself, and so to all the consequent course of events. Whatever the true rites of returning May may have been, in classical antiquity, the observance comes into this tale from the manners of mediæval Europe, not of ancient Greece.

With what glad and light ritual the Athenians, in the first years after the war of the Seven Chiefs against Thebes, did homage to their king and queen of the May, we do not remember to have seen distinctly described. At this day the young folk of old Hellas parade the streets shouting the classical *χαλιδωνισμα*, or song of the swallow, on the 1st of March. The Romans held their Floralia from the 28th of April to the 1st of May, danced and sang, and had games, and crowned themselves

with garlands and with flowers. Nevertheless, you instinctively feel that the singularly graceful picture of Emelie, called up from slumber by the dawning May morning, and proceeding to pluck in the royal garden the dew-fresh and bright materials of her own coronal, owes nothing to the lore of books, but is breathingly imaged from some gracious original of our own good fourteenth century. You remain assured, that the trustworthy poet records his own proper love-experience in adjusting the occasion that is to vivify with a new passion the dolorous prison of the two Thebans, and turn the sworn brothers-in-arms into rivals at deadly feud with each other. That rougher age of the world—rude the day was not that produced and cherished Chaucer—had this virtue, that the grown-up men and women were still, by a part of their heart, children. The welcoming-in of the May, is described by the old poets in different countries of Europe as a passion—seizing upon young and old, high and low. All were for the hour children—children of nature. When, therefore, that love at first sight, which immediately becomes a destiny to the two kinsmen, governing their whole after-life, is in this manner attached by our poet to the visit made upon this occasion by Emelie to the garden which their tower overlooks, the reader is entitled to understand that the poet does for him the very best thing any poet can do, that he infuses into his poetical dream his own pulsating life-blood.

The immense joy and universal jubilee of nature, called out by the annual renewing of warmth, light, life, and beauty, and the share and the sympathy of man in the diffusive and exuberant benediction, fix themselves and take form in stated and ordered celebrations all the world over. It seems hard to deny to any nation the rejoicing on the return of summer. All have it. Yet certainly Chaucer paints from his own experience, and not from erudition. The poem of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" is a mere extolling of love and the May. The exordium is a sort of incidental hymn to the Love-god, and runs into affirming and arguing at some length the peculiar energy of his dominion in this month.

"And most his might he shedeth ever in May."

The complaint of the Black Knight—love is his complaint—falls in May. The unhappy lover has built himself a lodge or bower in the greenwood, whither with returning May he withdraws himself from all feasts, societies, and throngs of

men, to dedicate himself to love-mourning, and where, under the trees, whilst the month of love lasts, he remains abandoned to his love-martyrdom. That "Dreme of Chaucer," which has been supposed, although Tyrwhitt thinks fancifully, to refer to the marriage of John of Gaunt with the Lady Blanche, happens as he lay alone on a night of May thinking of his lady. The opening of the Flower and Leaf puts you in doubt whether you are not rather in April than in May; but by and by you find that the nightingale has been all the day long singing the service of May. All this amorous and poetical caressing of the May discovers, in the twice resting the process of events in "The Knight's Tale" upon the observance of May-day, a significancy otherwise perhaps less evident. Shakspeare, in the verse—

"As full of spirits as the month of May,"

expresses the natural ground which ceremony and eulogy, solemn or quaint, have artificially displayed in the usages of old times, and in the poetry of Chaucer.

But to return to our two knights. They are *brothers-in-arms*—by the by, rather a romantic than a classical institution—and so pledged to help one another in love; and the question arises, as the ground of a long argument, which is traitor to the other. Yet here, too, is intermixed the classical with the romantic. For Palamon, who first sees Emelie, takes her for the goddess Venus; on which Arcite ingeniously sounds his own plea, that *he* first loved her as a woman, and so is entitled to the help of the other. Their silent arming of one another, for mortal duel, in the forest, each

"As frendly as he were his owen brother,"

reminds you of chivalrous loyalty and faith; although it would be hard to deny that the antique warriors might have been as honest. But the truth is, that in Homer every knight arms himself, and the two Thebans must have worn modern armour to need this help. And yet here what a classical relief in the simile of the hunter! Of all transplantation from the modern to the ancient, tempered nevertheless with antiquity, their great listed Duel stands foremost. Take it, with all the circumstances that introduce it. Whilst the kinsmen are fighting, Theseus rides up, "pulled out a sword, and cried, Ho!" This is the language of the 14th century, and the western side of Europe. But he swears by "mighty Mars,"

that the first who strikes another stroke shall lose his head. Both are liable to death. Palamon for having broken prison, and Arcite, because his avoiding Athenian ground on pain of death was an original condition of his liberation. Theseus' challenge to them, "Tell me who ye are that are so bold as to fight here without judge or officer," is the manner of the poet's day. In the time of Theseus, fighting in a wood near Athens was free to all the world.

What saves them? The interposition of the ladies! Queen, princess, court and all, who think it a pity two gallant young "gentil men" of "gret estat" shall die, and all for love. The duke is moved; for pity soon melts in a "gentil herte." And he appoints a regular Tournament—that at the year's end they shall meet, each bringing a hundred knights, and fight it out. He pledges himself "upon his troth, and as he is a knight," that he who shall slay his adversary, or "out of listes him drive," shall have Emelie to wife.

The lists are—from the hint of antiquity—a regular Amphitheatre, a mile about—walled, and the seats in steps to the height of sixty paces. Art and wealth have been lavished in making the field worthy of the fight. Over the Eastern gate is an altar and an "Oratorie" to Venus—over the Western, to Mars—on the North side is one to Diana. The description of the three Fanes is of surpassing power. Among the portraiture in that of Mars is the Suicide, for whom the relater, poet or knight, forgets himself in his vivid conception, and says that he *saw it*.

The allies of the two knights are both classically and romantically chosen. With Palamon comes "Licurge, the grete king of Trace." That is classical. With Arcite "the grete Emetrius, the king of Inde." That is romantic. The persons of the two kings are described at large, with great strength and fecundity of painting. And here, again, in the way of art, the contrast is admirably sustained and effective. Licurge is the older, more uncouth, and giant-like. The youthful Emetrius is more splendid and knightly. Both are thoroughly legal and formidable. Licurge is black-bearded, for the sake of more savage effect; wherefore the monarch of Inde, contrariwise to the actual distribution of races over the earth, or more properly speaking to the known influence of climate, is fair. His crisp and ringed locks are yellow, and glitter like the sun. His complexion may trouble the *physiologists*; but is not likely to discompose the poetical

reader under the tuition of Christopher North. The "four white bolles" that draw the "char of gold" upon which the Thracian *stands*, are as antique as you can devise. The tamed eagle as any lily white, which Emetrius carries "for his deduit"—therefore, in lieu of a hawk upon his hand, is of manners that are almost our own.

Each king brings his own hundred knights. They arrive "on the Sunday abouten prime." The tilting will be next day. The three persons principally interested in the issue of the impending combat perform, in the interval, their devotions at the three several shrines, which had been aptly provided for them in the building of the lists. Each of them obtains an answer from the respective deity. Two hours ere the day, Palamon visits the oratory of Venus. He prays that he may win Emilie, although he should lose what comparatively he regards with indifference, the palm of the conflict. The statue of the goddess renders, after a long delay, the signal of acceptance. Emilie, at sunrise, worships Diana. Her first prayer is, that she may remain till death the virgin servant, herself a huntress, of the divine huntress; and if that may not be, that he may win her who best loves her. Upon the altar she kindles two fires, which burn ominously. One goes out and revives again. Then the other is wholly quenched—drops of blood falling from out the hissing and burning brands. All this the process of the combat and its consequences afterwards elucidate; as the appearing goddess forewarns her chaste worshiper. The "nexte hour of Marte"—whereof anon—Arcite offers prayer and incense to the God of War. He is accepted, and victory promised; but the oracular voice murmurs the words faintly and hollowly.

All this intricate omination comes forcibly out in the sequence of events; and is in itself, as you feel, at all events right classical. The treatment of the Hours lies deeper. It is astrological. For the twelve now longer and now shorter hours, into which the time from sunrise to sunset—and the twelve now shorter and now longer, into which the time from sunset to sunrise—was divided, belonged to the Seven Planets, in the order Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna—by following out which order, you will discover that, since the first hour of Sunday belongs to the Sun, giving name to the day, the twenty-third hour, or the second before sunrise of the following day, will belong to

Venus, to whom Palamon then prays—and the hour of sunrise next day belongs to the Moon, or Diana, to whom Emelie then addressed herself. Following the circle, you find that the fourth hour of Monday belongs to Mars. This is Arcite's hour. And if you wonder how such Chaldaic and Egyptian lore should come into your tale of chivalry, you will be relieved by understanding that these dedications had, in our poetical ages, due popularity for infusing into them a poetical efficiency; forasmuch as an old French "Shepherds' Calendar," cited by Tyrwhitt, alleges the very rule which we have given, for the instruction of him "who will weet how the Shepherds do wit which planet reigneth every hour of the day and of the night." This timing, therefore, of sacrifice and orison of the planetary hours, is pertinently and speakingly feigned by Chaucer.

The Tournament follows, which is mediæval enough. Arcite, according to the promise of Mars, is victorious. Palamon is taken and bound. But here is the difficulty. Venus has promised Emelie to Palamon. Saturn, the *αὐτομαγισ*, finds a remedy, and gratifies his grand-daughter. As Arcite, the victor, having taken off his helmet, rides along the lists to show himself to all, and especially to Emelie, Pluto, at the request of Saturn, sends an infernal fury who starts up out of the ground before him. The scared horse plunges and stumbles; Arcite is thrown upon his head, and taken up for dead. He is not dead; but he dies and is burned, after the fashion of Patroclus and Hector; and twelve months after, his virgin widow is by Theseus given in marriage to Palamon.

What is the real effect of all this commixture? The truth is, that under such circumstances, after a little resistance and struggling, you give in, and let the poet have his own way, provided that he is a poet. There is but one condition—that the poet put, into whatever manners, true life. Then you willingly give up your own dull book learning, and accept his painting for the authentic record of reality. You are, in fact, gradually conducted to this pass, that you look upon history as useful for ministering materials to poetry, not upon poetry as bound to teach history. But Chaucer *has* wonderfully put life into the classical part of the poem, so that you can hardly say that he seems more at home in giving the manners which he has seen, than in reviving the manners which he had only read. He has this in common

with Shakspeare. In common with Shakspeare he has, too, the apology for the confusion of manners—of having lived before we were as critical in the costume of ages and nations as we now are.

The "Knight's Tale," after the requisition usually laid upon an epic fable, makes use, and skilfully, of preternatural machinery. And here we will venture a vindication against an illustrious critic. The first suggestion to the banished Arcite of returning to Athens, comes to him in sleep. There is a slight involving of the supernatural—at least of the fabulous. He dreams that Mercury appears and announces to him an end of his wo at Athens. On awaking, he casts his eyes on a mirror, and sees that he is so changed with love-pining that he no longer knows himself—goes in disguise to Athens, offers himself to serve in the household of Emelie, and is accepted. Sir W. Scott blames this introduction of Mercury as needless, but let it be remembered:—

First. That this is introductory to far more important divine interpositions, is in keeping with them, and prepares the imagination for them.

Secondly. That, so managed, it is the least violent intervention of a god; the apparition being ambiguous between a natural dream and a real divine manifestation: an ambiguity which, by the by, is quite after the antique. So Mercury appears to Æneas in a dream in the Fifth Book of the *Æneid*: and compare Hector's Ghost, &c.

Thirdly. That a psychological fact may be understood as here "lively shadowed:"—namely, that active purposes have often their birth during the mystery of sleep; and it would be a very felicitous poetical expression of this phenomenon to turn the oracular suggestion of the soul into a deity—*Sua cuique deus fit dira cupido*.

Fourthly. It is completely probable, that the fancy of a believer in Mercury would actually shape his own dreaming thought into the suitable deity.—The vision is lightly touched by Chaucer, and gracefully translated by Dryden. The classical inventions throughout appear to be very much from Boccaccio: but the poetry of the relation Chaucer's own.

Do you wish to see Dryden in his majesty? Look here:—

"But in the dome of the mighty Mars the red,
With different figures all the sides were spread,
This temple, less in form, with equal grace,
Was imitative of the first in Thrace:

For that cold region was the loved abode,
 And sovereign mansion of the warrior god.
 The landscape was a forest wide and bare,
 Where neither beast nor human kind repair;
 The fowl that scent afar, the borders fly,
 And *then* the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.
 A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
 And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found;
 Or woods with knots and knares deform'd and old,
 Headless the most, and hideous to behold;
 A rattling tempest through the branches went,
 That stripp'd them bare, and one sole way they bent.
 Heaven froze above severe, the clouds congeal,
 And through the crystal vault appear'd the standing hail.
 Such was the face without; a mountain stood
 Threat'ning from high, and overlook'd the wood;
 Beneath the lowering brow, and on a bent,
 The temple stood of Mars armipotent;
 The flame of burning steel, that cast a glare
 From far, and seem'd to thaw the freezing air.
 A straight long entry to the temple led,
 Blind with high walls, and horror overhead;
 Thence issued such a blast and hollow roar,
 As threaten'd from the hinge to heave the door;
 In through that door a northern light there shone;
 'Twas all it had, for windows there were none.
 The gate was adamant; eternal frame!
 Which, hew'd by Mars himself, from Indian quarries came,
 The labour of a God; and all along
 Tough iron plates were clench'd to make it strong.
 A ton about was every pillar there;
 A polish'd mirror shone not half so clear;
 There saw I how the secret felon wrought,
 And treason labouring in the traitor's thought.
 And midwife Time the ripen'd plot to murder brought.
 There the red Anger dared the pallid Fear;
 Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy leer;
 Soft-smiling and demurely looking down,
 But hid the dagger underneath the gown;
 The assassinating wife, the household fiend;
 And, far the blackest there, the traitor-friend.
 On t'other side, there stood Destruction bare,
 Unpunish'd Rapine, and a waste of war;
 Contest, with sharpen'd knives, in cloisters drawn,
 And all with blood bespread the holy lawn.
 Loud menaces were heard, and foul disgrace,
 And bawling infamy in language base,
 Till sense was lost in sound, and silence fled the place.
 The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
 The gore congeal'd was clotted in his hair;

With eyes half closed, and gaping mouth he lay,
 And grim, as when he breathed his sullen soul away.
 In midst of all the dome Misfortune sat,
 And gloomy Discontent and fell Debate,
 And Madness laughing in his ireful mood;
 And arm'd complaint on theft, and cries of blood.
 There was the murder'd corpse in covert laid,
 And violent death in thousand shapes display'd:
 The city to the soldiers' rage resign'd;
 Successless wars, and poverty behind;
 Ships burnt in fight, or forced on rocky shores,
 And the rash hunter strangled by the boars;
 The new-born babe by nurses overlaid;
 And the cook caught within the raging fire he made.
 All ills of Mars his nature, flame and steel;
 The gasping charioteer beneath the wheel
 Of his own car; the ruin'd house that falls
 And intercepts her lord betwixt the walls.
 The whole division that to Mars pertains,
 All trades of death that deal in steel for gains,
 Were there; the butcher, armourer, and smith,
 Who forges sharpen'd faulchions, or the scythe.
 The scarlet conquest on a tower was placed
 With shouts and soldiers' acclamations graced;
 A pointed sword hung threat'ning o'er his head,
 Sustain'd but by a slender twine of thread.
 There saw I Mars his Ides, the Capitol,
 The seer in vain foretelling Cæsar's fall;
 The last Triumvirs, and the wars they move,
 And Antony, who lost the world for love:
 These, and a thousand more, the Fane adorn,
 Their fates were painted ere the men were born;
 All copied from the heavens, and ruling force
 Of the red star in his revolving course.
 The form of Mars high on a chariot stood,
 All sheathed in arms, and gruffly look'd the God:
 Two geomantic figures were display'd
 Above his head, a warrior and a maid,
 One when direct, and one when retrograde."

"The Knight's Tale, the longest and most laboured of Chaucer's stories, possesses a degree of regularity which might satisfy the most severe critic. It is true that the honour arising from thence must be assigned to the more ancient bard, who had himself drawn his subject from an Italian model; but the high and decided preference which Dryden has given to this story, although somewhat censured by Trapp, enables us to judge how much the poet held an accurate combination of parts, and coherence of narrative, essentials of epic poetry." This is in Sir Walter's happiest

natural vein. Not so the astounding passage that follows it. "*That a classic scholar like Trapp should think the plan of the Knight's Tale equal to that of the Iliad, is a degree of candour not to be hoped for; but surely to an unprejudiced reader, a story which exhausts in its conclusion all the interest which it has excited in its progress; which, when terminated, leaves no question to be asked, no personage undisposed of, and no curiosity unsatisfied, is, abstractedly considered, more gratifying than the history of a few weeks of a ten years' war, commenced long after the siege had begun, and ending long before the city was taken!*" Why, is not this the true and magnificent praise of the Iliad, that from the heart of the immense war it has taken out a story of individual interest, which begins where your curiosity asks, and where your sympathy finds repose? Achilles—his quarrel with Agamemnon—his loss of Patroclus—his vengeance on Hector—accomplished when he willingly relinquished the body to burial? That is the integrity of an epic fable, which employs the Ten Years' War, not for its subject, but for the illimitable field in which its gigantic subject moves. He was the greatest of the poets, who knew how to make the storms, rising and falling in the single breast of the goddess-born, more to you, his hearer, than the war which has encamped a hundred thousand Greeks in siege before the imperial city of Priam. From a great poet, the most Homeric of the modern poets—what a judgment on the Iliad! Trapp's words are—"Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo iudice, id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur." Perfectly true. What says Dryden? "It is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the 'Ilias' or the 'Æneid.' The story is more pleasing than either of them, the manner as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful, only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least." Godwin says truly, "This eulogium must be acknowledged to be written in a spirit of ridiculous and impertinent exaggeration." And he then says, as truly, that it is "full of novelty and surprise,

is everywhere alive, comprises the most powerful portrait of chivalry that was perhaps ever believed, and possesses everything in splendour and in action that can most conspicuously point out the scenes of the narrative to the eye of the reader." Dryden's version is indeed what Warton has pronounced it to be—"the most animated and harmonious piece of versification in the English language."

If you ask what reconciles you to the prevalent confusion of manners in this noble poem, it is the earnest simple spirit with which the Knight goes on relating as if he believed every word. It is, as we said, with Chaucer as with Shakspeare. Shakspeare mixes times of the world, and we bear it. Iachimo, a complete modern Italian—a more courtly Iago—serves under Lucius, general to some emperor—we forget which, if we ever knew—of old Rome; and beguiles, to the death almost, that Posthumous Leonatus—a Celt, by the by, with two Latin names—to whom Jupiter—not exactly the supreme deity of the Cello-British Pantheon—descends in actual presence. We, the auditors, or the readers, meanwhile, breathe no whisper of doubt or dissatisfaction. Why should we? We believe with eye, and ear, and imagination, and heart; and are as fain of our wildly-compounded—*real-unreal*—dream, as the birds are of the dawning. Hamlet, born and bred in the court of our own Elizabeth, and abruptly called up to town, on the point of graduating with honours at Oxford, is shown to our credulous apprehension rooted upon a soil and in a century when and where there were no human shapes to be met with but bloodthirsty Vikings and invulnerable Berserkers. And we take all in excellent part. Why shall we not? We gain past all computation by the slight intellectual concession. Besides, we cannot well help ourselves; for we are not the Masters. The enchanter is the Master:—who sets us down, not after the saying of Horace, now in Greece and now in Britain—but in Britain and in Greece at one and the same moment.

Shakspeare commingles widely divided times; and why, two hundred years before him, shall not Chaucer? It requires practice to read Chaucer. Not only do you need familiarizing to a form of the language, which is not your own, but much more to a simplicity of style, which at first appears to you like barrenness and poverty. It seems meagre. You miss too much the rich and lavish colours of the later time. Your eye is used to gorgeousness and gaudiness. The severe

plainness of the old manner wants zest for you. But, when you are used to Chaucer, can accept his expressions, and think and feel with him, this hindrance wears off. You find a strong imagination—a gentle pathos—no lack of accumulation, where needed—but the crowding is always of effective circumstances or images—a playfulness, upon occasion, even in serious writing—but the special characteristic of the style is, that the word is always to the purpose. He amply possesses his language, and his sparing expression is chosen, and never inadequate—never indigent. His rule is, that for every phrase there be matter; and narrative or argument is thus constantly progressive. He does not appear to be hurried out of himself by the heat of composition. His good understanding completely goes along with him, and weighs every word.

Dryden's rendering of Chaucer is a totally distinct operation from his Englishing of Virgil—Homer—Lucretius—Juvenal—Ovid. And you are satisfied that it should be so. He could not transfer these poets, accomplished in art, and using their language in an age of its perfection, with *too* close a likeness of themselves. He translates because the language is unknown to his presumed reader. This is but half his motive with Chaucer. The language would be more easily got over; but the mind is of another age, and that is less accessible—more distant from us than the obsolete dialect. We are contented to have the style of that day translated into the style of our own. Is this a dereliction of poetical principle? Hardly. The spirited and splendid verse and language of Dryden have given us a new poem. Why should our literature have forborne from so enriching herself? Hear Dryden himself.

“But there are other judges, who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary notion. They suppose there is a certain veneration due to his old language, and that it is little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion, that somewhat of his good sense will suffer in this transfusion, and much of the beauty of his thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more grace in their old habit. Of this opinion was that excellent person whom I mentioned, the late Earl of Leicester, who valued Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despised him. My lord dissuaded me from this attempt (for I was thinking of it some years before his death), and his authority prevailed so far with me as to defer my undertaking while he lived, in

deference to him; yet my reason was not convinced with what he urged against it. If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then as his language grows obsolete his thoughts must grow obscure.

*' Multa renascentur, quæ jam cecidere; cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi.'*

"When an ancient word, for its sound and significance, deserves to be revived, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed. Customs are changed, and even statutes are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. As for the other part of the argument—that his thoughts will lose of their original beauty by the innovation of words—in the first place, not only their beauty but their being is lost, where they are no longer understood, which is the present case. I grant that something must be lost in all transference—that is; in all translations; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be lost, or at least be maimed, when it is scarce intelligible, and that but to a few. How few are there who can read Chaucer, so as to understand him perfectly! And if imperfectly, then with less profit and no pleasure. It is not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I have taken these pains with him—let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand. I will go further, and dare to add, that what beauties I lose in some places, I give to others which had them not originally. But in this I may be partial to myself; let the reader judge, and I submit to his decision. Yet I think I have just occasion to complain of them, who, because they understand Chaucer, would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same advantage, and hoard him up as misers do their granddam gold, only to look on it themselves, and hinder others from making use of it. In sum, I seriously protest, that no man ever had, or can have, a greater veneration for Chaucer than myself. I have translated some part of his works, only that I might perpetuate his memory, or at least refresh it, amongst my countrymen. If I have altered him anywhere for the better, I must at the same time acknowledge, that I could have done

nothing without him. *Facile est inventis addere* is no great commendation ; and I am not so vain to think I have deserved a greater."

You are an Englishman, and a scholar in your mother-tongue. Good ! You have dabbled, it may be, in Anglo-Saxon, Alfred's English. It is all very well. You read Chaucer easily. We congratulate you. You will, we hope, love the speech, and the soul, and the green, grassy mould of old England all the better. We praise you for searching England near and far, high and low. Do this heartily ; do this understandingly ; and you are excellently engaged. But do not grudge your next neighbour, who is merely a modern Englishman—a thorough good-fellow of one, however,—*his* Chaucer, in a tongue and manner that he can read without stepping out of himself—his Chaucer, for his possession of whom he thanks Dryden, and from his grateful heart ejaculates "glorious John !"

Dryden's poetical power appears most of all, perhaps, in his translations ; and his translation of the most vulgar renown is that which unites his name to that of the great Roman epepeist ; but it is not his greatest achievement. The tales modernized and paraphrased from Chaucer, and those filled up into poetical telling from Boccacio, as they are the works of Dryden's which the most fasten themselves with interest upon a mind open to poetry and free from preconceived literary opinion, so do they seem to us to be, after all, those which a versed critic must distinguish as stamped, beyond the others, with the skilled ease, the flow as of original composition, the sustained spirit, and force, and fervour—in short, by the mastery, and by the keen zest of Writing. They are the works of his more than matured mind—of his waning life ; and they show a rare instance of a talent so steadfastly and perseveringly self-improved, as that, in life's seventh decennium, the growth of Art overweighed the detriment of Time. But, in good truth, no detriment of time is here perceptible ; youthful fire and accomplished skill have the air of being met in these remarkable pieces. Chaucer, in his last and greatest labour, the *Canterbury Tales*, first effectually creating his own style, and his translator, Dryden, at about the same years, excelling himself to infuse renovated life into the *Canterbury Tales*—are brought singularly together.

The age of Chaucer was widely and variously different

from that of Dryden. Knowledge, taste, art had advanced with strides between the two dates ; and the bleak and stormy English political atmosphere of the fourteenth century had changed, notwithstanding the commotion of the later civil war, into a far milder and more settled element when the seventeenth drew towards a close. Genius, likewise, in the two poets, was distinguished by marked differences. Strength, simplicity, earnestness, human affection, characterize Chaucer. Dryden has plenty of strength, too, but it shows itself differently. The strength of Chaucer is called out by the requisition of the subject, and is measure to the call. Dryden bounds and exults in his nervous vigour, like a strong steed broke loose. Exuberant power and rejoicing freedom mark Dryden versifying—a smooth flow, a prompt fertility, a prodigal splendour of words and images. Old Chaucer, therefore, having passed through the hands of Dryden, is no longer old Chaucer—no longer Chaucer. But the well-chosen, and well-disposed, and well-told tale, full of masculine sense, lively with humour, made present with painting—for all this Chaucer brings to Dryden—becomes, by nothing more than the disantiquating and the different hand, a new poem.

Place the two side by side, and whilst you feel that a total change has been effected, you shall not always easily assign the secret of the change wrought. There then comes into view, it must be owned, something like an unpractised awkwardness in the gait of the great elder bard, which you less willingly believe, or to which you shut your eyes, when you have him by himself to yourself. The step of Dryden is rapid, and has perfect decision. He knows, with every spring he takes, where he shall alight. Now Chaucer, you would often say, is retarded by looking where he shall next set down his foot. The old poetry details the whole series of thinking. The modern supposes more. That is the consequence of practice. Writer and reader are in better intelligence. A hint goes further—that which is known to be meant needs not be explicitly said. Style, as the art advances, gains in dispatch. There is better keeping, too, in some respects. The dignity of the style—the purpose of the Beautiful—are more considerably maintained. And perhaps one would be justified in saying, that if the earnestness of the heart, which was in the old time the virtue of virtues, is less—the glow of the fancy, the tone of inspiration, are propor-

tionally more. And if anywhere the thought is made to give way to the straits of the verse, the modern art more artfully hides the commission.

In our preceding paper, in which we spoke at large of the genius of Chaucer, we gave some very noble extracts from Dryden's version of the Knight's Tale. But we did not then venture to quote any long passages from the original, unassured how they might look on our page to the eyes of Young Britain. Having good reason to know that Young Britain desires some veritable Chaucer from the hands of Maga, we shall now indulge her with some specimens; and as we have been given to understand that Dryden's versions of the same passages will be acceptable for comparison, they shall be now produced, while the wishes of Young Britain shall be further gratified with an occasional running commentary from our popular pen on both poets. We shall confine ourselves to the Knight's Tale, with which all who love us are by this time familiar.

Let us lead off with one or two short specimens, and be not frightened, fair eyes, with the seemingly strange, mayhap obsolete-looking, words of the ancient bard. Con them over a few times, and they will turn into letters of light.

CHAUCER.

Thus passeth yere by yere, and day by day,
Till it falle ones in a morwe of May,
That Emelie, that fayrer was to sene
Than is the lillie upon the stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with flourés newe
(For with the rosé colour strof hire hewe;
I no't which was the finer of hem two)
Er it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all redy dight,
For May wol have no slogardie a-night.
The seson priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte,
And sayth "arise, and do thin observance."

This maketh Emelie have remembrance
To don honour to May, and for to rise.
Yclothed was she fresshe for to devise.
Hire yelwe here was broided in a tresse,
Behind hire back, a yerdé long I guess.
And in the garden at the soame uprist
She walketh up and down where as hire list.
She gathereth flourés, partie white and red,
To make a sotel gerlond for hire hed,
And as an angel hevenlich she sang, &c.

DRYDEN.

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once—'twas on the morn of cheerful May—
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen
Than the fair lily on the flowery green,
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,
For with the rosy colour strove her hue,
Waked, as her custom was, before the day,
To do the observance due to sprightly May;
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard sleep;
Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves,
Inspires new flames, revives extinguish'd loves.
In this remembrance, Emily, ere day,
Arose, and dress'd herself in rich array;
Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair,
Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair;
A riband did the braided tresses bind,
The rest was loose, and wanton'd in the wind:
Aurora had but newly chased the night,
And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,
When to the garden-walk she took her way,
To sport and trip along in cool of day,
And offer maiden vows in honour of the May.

At every turn she made a little stand,
And thrust among the thorns her lily hand
To draw the rose; and every rose she drew,
She shook the stalk, and brush'd away the dew;
Then party-coloured flowers of white and red
She wove, to make a garland to her head.
This done, she sung and caroll'd out so clear,
That men and angels might rejoice to hear.
Even wondering Philomel forgot to sing,
And learn'd from her to welcome in the spring.

What can you wish more innocently beautiful than
Chaucer's—what more graceful than Dryden's Emelie?
And now look at Arcite—how he, too, does his observance of
the May.

CHAUCER.

The besy lark, the messenger of day,
Saleweth in hire song the morwe gray;
And fyr Phœbus riseth up so bright
That all the orient laugheth of the sight,
And with his stremes drieth in the greves
The silver dropes hanging on the leves,
And Arcite that is in the court real
With Theseus the squier principal,

Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
 And for to don his observance to May,
 Remembring on the point of his desire
 He on his courser, sterling as the fire,
 Is ridden to the feldès him to play,
 Out of the court, were it a mile or tway.
 And to the grove of which that I you told,
 By aventure his way he 'gan to hold,
 To maken him a gerlond of the greves,
 Were it of woodbind or of hawthorn leves,
 And laud he song agen the sonnè shene.
 O May, with all thy flourès and thy grene,
 Right welcome be thou faire freschè May,
 I hope that I some grene here getten may.

DRYDEN.

The morning lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluted, in her song, the morning gray:
 And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
 That all the horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight.
 He, with his tepid rays, the rose renews,
 And licks the drooping leaves, and dries the dews;
 When Arcite left his bed, resolved to pay
 Observance to the month of merry May:
 Forth, on his fiery steed, betimes he rode,
 That scarcely prints the turf on which he trode:
 At ease he seem'd, and prancing o'er the plains,
 Turn'd only to the grove his horse's reins,
 The grove I named before, and lighting there
 A woodbine garland sought to crown his hair;
 Then turn'd his face against the rising day,
 And raised his voice to welcome in the May:
 For thee, sweet month, the groves green liveries wear,
 If not the first, the fairest of the year:
 For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours,
 And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers:
 When thy short reign is past, the feverish sun
 The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.
 So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,
 Nor goats, with venom'd teeth, thy tendrils bite.
 As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find
 The fragrant greens I seek my brows to bind.

In Chaucer, Arcite's address to the "merry May" is but of three plain lines, and they suffice; in Dryden, of ten ornate, and they suffice too—"alike, but oh! how different!" The plain three are more in character, for Arcite was thinking of Emelie all the while—but the ornate ten are in season now, for summer has come at last, and recite them to yourself and Amaryllis in the shade.

But now for a loftier strain. Palamon and Arcite are about to fight for Emelie—and lo and behold their auxiliar kings !

Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon
 Licurge himself, the gretè king of Trace:
 Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
 The cercles of his eyen in his head
 They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
 And like a griffon lokèd he about,
 With kemped herès on his browès stout;
 His limmès gret, his brawnès hard and stronge,
 His shouldres brode, his armès round and longe.
 And as the guisè was in his countree,
 Full high upon a char of gold stood he,
 With fourè white bollès in the trais.
 Instead of cote-armure on his harnais,
 With paylès yelwe, and bright as any gold,
 He had a berès-skin, cole-blake for old;
 His longè here was kempt behind his bak,
 As any ravenès fether it shone for blake,
 A wreth of gold arm-gret, of hugè weight,
 Upon his head sate ful of stones bright,
 Of finè ruhins and of diamants.
 About his char ther wanten whiè alauns
 Twenty and mo, as great as any sterc,
 To huntèn at the leon or the dère,
 And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound;
 Colored with gold, and torettes filed round.
 A hundred lordès had he in his route,
 Armed full wel with heriès sterne and stoute.
 With Arcita, in stories as men find,
 The gret Emetrius, the King of Inde,
 Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
 Covered with cloth of gold diapered wel,
 Came riding like the god of armès, Mars.
 His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
 Couched with perlès, white, and round, and grete.
 His sadel was of brent gold new ybete:
 A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging,
 Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
 His crispè here like ringès was yronne,
 And that was yelwe, and glittered as the sonne.
 His nose was high, his eyen bright eitryn,
 His tippès round, his colour was sanguin,
 A fewè fraknes in his face yspreint,
 Betwixen yelwe and blake somdel ymeint,
 And as a leon he his loking caste.
 Of five-and-twenty yere his age I caste.
 His berd was wel begonnen for to spring;
 His vois was as a trompè thondering.

Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
 A gerlond fresshe, and lusty for to sene.
 Upon his hond he bare for his deduit
 An egle tame, as any lily whit.
 An hundred lordes had he with him there
 All armed save hir hedes in all hir gere,
 Full richely in allè manere thinges.
 For trusteth wel, that erlès, dukès, kinges,
 Were gathered in this noble compaignie,
 For love, and for encrease of chevalrie.
 About this king ther ran on every part
 Full many a tame leon and leopart.

What a plenitude of brilliant and powerful description ! Every verse, every half verse, adds a characterizing circumstance, a vivifying image. And what an integrity, and self-completeness has the daring and large conception of either martial king ! And how distinguishably the two stand apart from each other ! But above all, what a sudden and rich addition to our stock of heroic poetical portraitures ! Here is no imitation. Neither Lycurgus nor Emetrius is anywhere in poetry but here. Not in the *Iliad*—not in the *Æneid*. You cannot compose either of them from the heroes of antiquity. Each is original—new—self-subsisting. The monarch of Thrace is invested with more of uncouth and savage terror. He is bigger, broader. Might for destroying is in his bulk of bone and muscle. Bulls draw him, and he looks taurine. A bear-skin mantles him ; and you would think him of ursine consanguinity. The huge lump of gold upon his raven-black head, and the monster hounds, bigger than the dog-kind can be imagined to produce, that gambel about his chariot, or betoken the grosser character of power—the power that is in size—material. The impression of the portentous is made without going avowedly out of the real. His looking is resembled to that of a griffin, because in that monster imagined at or beyond the verge of nature, the ferocity of a devouring, destroying creature can be conceived as more wild, and grim, and fearful than in nature's known offspring, in all of whom some kindlier sparkles from the heart of the great mother, some beneficently-planted instincts, are thought of as tempering and qualifying the pure animal fierceness and rage.

The opposed King of Inde has also of the prodigious, within the limits of the apparently natural. He is also a tremendous champion ; but he has more fire, and less of mere thewes, in

the furnishing of his warlike sufficiency. There is more of mind and fancy about him. His fair complexion at once places him in a more gracious category of death-doers. Compare to the car drawn by four white bulls, the gallant bay charger barded with steel, and caparisoned with cloth of gold. Compare to that yellow-nailed, swart bearskin, the coat-armour made with cloth of Tars, the mantelet thick-sown with rubies; for the locks like the raven's plumage, the curls like Apollo's tresses. He is in the dazzling prime of youth. Black Lycurge, without question, has more than twice his years. The beard that yet springs, joined close to the voice that is like a trumpet, is well found for raising the expression of native power in that thundering voice. The laurel wreath for the ponderous golden diadem—the white eagle on the wrist for the snowy alauns, are all studied to carry through the same opposition. Emetrius is a son of chivalry; Lycurge might be kin or kith, with a difference for the better, of that renowned tyrant Diomedes, who put men's limbs for hay into his manger, and of whom Hercules had, not so long ago, ridded the world. *His* looking, too, is paralleled away from humanity, but it is by the kingly and generous lion. Observe that the companions of the two kings are described, whether through chance or choice, in terms correspondingly opposite. The Thracian leads a hundred lords, with hearts stern and stout. The Indian's following, earls, dukes, kings, have thronged to him, for the love and increment of chivalry. The lions and leopards, too, that run about him have been tamed. They finish the Indian picture.

How does Dryden acquit himself here? Grandly.

DRYDEN.

With Palamon, above the rest in place,
Lycurgus came, the surly king of Thrace;
Black was his beard, and manly was his face:
The balls of his broad eyes rolled in his head,
And glared betwixt a yellow and a red;
He look'd a lion with a gloomy stare,
And o'er his eyebrows hung his matted hair;
Big-boned, and large of limbs, with sinews strong,
Broad-shouldered, and his arms were round and long.
Four milk-white bulls (the Thracian use of old),
Were yoked to draw his car of burnish'd gold.
Upright he stood, and bore aloft his shield,
Conspicuous from afar, and overlooked the field.

His surcoat was a bear-skin on his back;
 His hair hung long behind, and glossy raven-black.
 His ample forehead bore a coronet
 With sparkling diamonds and with rubies set;
 Ten brace, and more, of grayhounds, snowy fair,
 And tall as stags, ran loose, and coursed around his chair,
 A match for pards in flight, in grappling for the bear.
 With golden muzzles all their mouths were bound,
 And collars of the same their necks surround.
 Thus through the field Lycurgus took his way;
 His hundred knights attend in pomp and proud array.

To match this monarch, with strong Arcite came
 Emetrius, king of Inde, a mighty name!
 On a bay courser, goodly to behold,
 The trappings of his horse embossed with barbarous gold.
 Not Mars bestrode a steed with greater grace;
 His surcoat o'er his arms was cloth of Thrace,
 Adorned with pearls, all orient, round, and great;
 His saddle was of gold, with emeralds set;
 His shoulders large a mantle did attire,
 With rubies thick, and sparkling as the fire;
 His amber-coloured locks in ringlets run,
 With graceful negligence, and shone against the sun.
 His nose was aquiline, his eyes were blue,
 Ruddy his lips, and fresh and fair his hue;
 Some sprinkled freckles on his face were seen,
 Whose dusk set off the whiteness of the skin.
 His awful presence did the crowd surprise,
 Nor durst the rash spectator meet his eyes,
 Eyes that confess'd him born for kingly sway,
 So fierce, they flashed intolerable day.
 His age in nature's youthful prime appeared,
 And just began to bloom his yellow beard.
 Whene'er he spoke, his voice was heard around,
 Loud as a trumpet, with a silver sound;
 A laurel wreath'd his temples, fresh and green,
 And myrtle sprigs, the marks of love, were mix'd between.
 Upon his fist he bore, for his delight,
 An eagle well reclaim'd, and lily white.

His hundred knights attend him to the war,
 All arm'd for battle, save their heads were bare.
 Words and devices blazed on every shield,
 And pleasing was the terror of the field.
 For kings, and dukes, and barons you might see,
 Like sparkling stars, though different in degree,
 All for the increase of arms, and love of chivalry.
 Before the king tame leopards led the way,
 And troops of lions innocently play.
 So Bacchus through the conquer'd Indies rode,
 And beasts in gambols frisk'd before the honest god.

Dryden, you will have noticed, smoothes down, in some

places, a little the savagery of the Thracian. He has let go the fell gryphon, borrowing instead the lion's glances of Emetrius. For the more refined poetical invention of the advanced world, the opposition of the two animals for contrasting the two heroes, had possibly something of the burlesque. To Chaucer it was simply energetic. Or Dryden perhaps had not taken up a right view of the gryphon's looking, or he thought that his readers would not. He compensates Emetrius with plainly describing his eyes, in four very animated verses. Lycurge's combed eyebrows are a little mitigated, as is his ferocious bear-skin; and the ring of gold, as thick as a man's arm, has become merely a well-jeweled coronet. The spirit of the figure is, notwithstanding, caught and given. Dryden intends and conveys the impression purposed and effected by Chaucer.

If the black and sullen portrait loses a little grimness under the rich and harmonious pencil of Dryden, the needful contradistinction of the two royal auxiliars is maintained by heightening the favour of the more pleasing one. Throughout, Dryden with pains insists upon the more attractive features which we have claimed for the King of Inde. Grace is twice attributed to his appearance. He has gained blue eyes. His complexion is carefully and delicately handled, as may be especially seen in the management of the freckles. The *blooming* of his yellow beard, the thundering of the trumpet changed into a silvery sound, the myrtle sprigs mixed amongst the warlike laurel—all unequivocally display the gracious intentions of Dryden towards Emetrius—all aid in rendering effective the opposition which Chaucer has deliberately represented betwixt the two kings. Why the surly Thracian should be rather allied to the knight who serves Venus, and the more gallant Emetrius to the fierce Arcite, the favourite of the War-god, is left for the meditation of readers in all time to come.

The two opposed pictures are, perhaps, as highly finished as any part of the version. The words fall into their own places, painting their objects. The verse marches with freedom, fervour, and power. Translation has then reached its highest perfection when the suspicion of an original vanishes. The translator makes the matter his own, and writes as if from his own unassisted conception. The allusion to Bacchus is Dryden's own happy addition.

Now read with us—perhaps for the first time—the famous recital of the death of Arcite.

CHAUCEER.

Nought may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of all my sorwes amerte
To you, my lady, that I love most;
But I bequethe the service of my gost
To you aboven every creature,
Sin that my lif ne may no longer dure.

Alas the wol! alas the peines stronge
That I for you have suffered, and so longe!
Alas the deith! Alas min Emilie!
Alas departing of our compaignie!
Alas min hertes quene! alas my wif!
My hertes ladie, ender of my lif!
What is this world! what axen men to have?
Now with his love, now in his coldè grave
Alone withouten any compaignie.
Farewel my swete, farewel min Emilie,
And softe take me in your armes twey,
For love of God, and herkeneth what I sey.

I have here with my cosin Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day ago
For love of you, and for my jealousy.
And Jupiter so wis my soule gie,
To speken of a servant proprely,
With alle circumstanced trewely,
That is to sayn, trouth, honour, and knighthede,
Wisdom, humblesse, estat, and high kinrede,
Freedom, and all that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I non
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you, and wol don all his lif.
And if that ever ye shal ben a wif,
Forgyete not Palamon, the gentil man.

And with that word his speech faille began.
For from his feet up to his brest was come
The cold of death, which had him overnome.
And yet moreover in his armes two,
The vital strength is lost, and all ago.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte, sike and sore,
Gan faillen, whan the herte felle deith;
Dusked his eyen two, and failled his breth.
But on his ladie yet cast he his eye;
His laste word was: Mery, Emilie!
His spirit changed hous, and wente ther,
As I came never I cannot tellen wher.

Therefore I stent, I am no divinisre;
Of soules find I not in this registre.
Ne me lust not th' opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is cold, ther Mars his soule gie.
Now wol I speken forth of Emilie.

Shright Emilie, and houleth Palamon,
And Theseus his sister toke anon
Swouning, and bare hire from the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day,
To tellen how she wep both even and morwe?
For in swiche cas wimmen haven swiche sorwe,
Whan that hir housbondes ben fro hem ago,
That for the more part they sorwen so,
Or elles fallen in swiche maladie,
That attē lastē certainly they die.

Infinite ben the sorwes and the teres
Of oldē folk, and folk of tendre years
In all the toun for deth of this Theban:
For him ther wepeth bothē child and man:
So gret a weping was there non certain,
When Hector was ybrought, all fresh yslain
To Troy: alas! the pitee that was there,
Cratching of chekēs, rending eke of here.
Why woldest thou be ded? the women crie,
And haddest gold enough, and Emilie.

The death of Arcite is one of the scenes for which the admirers of Chaucer feel themselves entitled to claim, that it shall be judged in comparison with analogous passages of the poets that stand highest in the renown of natural and pathetic delineation. The dying words of the hero are as *proper* as if either great classical master of epic propriety—the Chian or the Mantuan—had left them to us. They are thoroughly sad, thoroughly loving, and supremely magnanimous. They have a perfect simplicity of purpose. They take the last leave of his Emelie; and they find for her, if ever she shall choose to put off her approaching estate of unwedded widowhood, a fit husband. They have answerable simplicity of sentiment and of language. He is unable to utter any particle of the pain which he feels in quitting her; but since the service which living he pays her, draws to an end, he pledges to her in the world whither he is going; the constant love-faith of his disembodied spirit. He recalls to her, with a word only, the long love-torments he has endured for her, exchanged, in the hour when they should have been crowned with possession, for the pains of death. He heaps endearing

names upon her. He glances at the vanity of human wishes imaged in himself, and he bids her farewell. That is his first heart-offering towards herself. Can a death-severed heart's elocution be imitated more aptly, more touchingly? He then turns to praising his rival. The jealousy, which had so long been the madness of both, filling the two kindred, brotherly, once-affectionate bosoms with hate, has, in his, melted away with life, thence melting away; and Arcite, with his last intelligible breath, describes Palamon briefly, point by point, as he knew him when he best loved him. He does not implore Emelie to remain for his sake single. He does not pretend, if she shall marry, to govern her choice; but he simply requests her, if the season shall ever arrive of such a choice, that she will not "forget Palamon." But the death-frost creeps on—his eyes darken—and the suspiration which finally wafts the soul from the body, beseeches the favour of her, only to earn whose favour he lived, and with earning whose favour he dies. Her name leaves his lips last. Could Shakspeare have helped Chaucer? The whole speech is admirably direct and short. We shall presently have to deal with one from the same poem, which wants that virtue.

The clamorous outbreak that follows, first of the private, and, supervening upon that, of the public grief, if not altogether couched in Homeric phraseology or numbers, has an air, however, of the Homeric painting. But, indeed, neither is the language deficient in fanciful significancy, nor the measure in good old melody.

DRYDEN.

No language can express the smallest part
Of what I feel, and suffer in my heart,
For you, whom best I love and value most:
But to your service I bequeath my ghost;
Which, from this mortal body when untied,
Unseen, unheard, shall hover at your side;
Nor fright you waking, nor your sleep offend,
But wait officious, and your steps attend.
How I have loved—excuse my faltering tongue!
My spirit's feeble, and my pains are strong:
This I may say, I only grieve to die,
Because I lose my charming Emily.
To die when heaven had put you in my power!
Fate could not choose a more malicious hour.
What greater curse could envious fortune give
Than just to die when I began to live!

Vain men, how vanishing a bliss we crave,
 Now warm in love, now withering in the grave!
 Never, O never more to see the sun!
 Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone!
 This fate is common; but I lose my breath
 Near bliss, and yet not bless'd, before my death.
 Farewell! but take me dying in your arms,
 'Tis all I can enjoy of all your charms:
 This hand I cannot but in death resign;
 Ah, could I live! but while I live 'tis mine.
 I feel my end approach, and thus embraced,
 Am pleased to die; but hear me speak my last.
 Ah, my sweet foe! for you, and you alone,
 I broke my faith with injured Palamon:
 But love the sense of right and wrong confounds;
 Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds.
 And much I doubt, should Heaven my life prolong,
 I should return to justify my wrong;
 For, while my former flames remain within,
 Repentance is but want of power to sin.
 With mortal hatred I pursued his life,
 Nor he, nor you, were guilty of the strife;
 Nor I, but as I loved; yet all combined,
 Your beauty, and my impotence of mind;
 And his concurrent flame that blew my fire;
 For still our kindred souls had one desire.
 He had a moment's right, in point of time;
 Had I seen first, then his had been the crime.
 Fate made it mine, and justified his right;
 Nor holds this earth a more deserving knight,
 For virtue, valour, and for noble blood,
 Truth, honour, all that is comprised in good;
 So help me Heaven, in all the world is none
 So worthy to be loved as Palamon.
 He loves you, too, with such a holy fire,
 As will not, cannot, but with life expire;
 Our vow'd affections both have often tried,
 Nor any love but yours could ours divide.
 Then, by my love's inviolable band,
 By my long-suffering, and my short command,
 If e'er you plight your vows when I am gone,
 Have pity on the faithful Palamon.
 This was his last; for Death came on apace,
 And exercised below his iron reign.
 Then upward to the seat of life he goes;
 Sense fled before him, what he touch'd he froze:
 Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,
 Though less and less of Emily he saw;
 So, speechless for a little space he lay;
 Then grasp'd the hand he held, and sigh'd his soul away.

But whither went his soul, let such relate
 Who search the secrets of the future state :
 Divines can say but what themselves believe ;
 Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative ;
 For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,
 And faith itself be lost in certainty.
 To live uprightly, then, is sure the best ;
 To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.
 The soul of Arcite went where heathens go,
 Who better live than we, though less they know.

In Palamon a manly grief appears ;
 Silent he wept, ashamed to show his tears.
 Emilia shriek'd but once ; and then, oppress'd
 With sorrow, sunk upon her lover's breast :
 Till Theseus in his arms conveyed, with care,
 Far from so sad a sight the swooning fair.
 'Twere loss of time her sorrow to relate ;
 Ill bears the sex a youthful lover's fate,
 When just approaching to the nuptial state :
 But, like a low-hung cloud, it rains so fast,
 That all at once it falls, and cannot last.
 The face of things is changed, and Athens now,
 That laughed so late, becomes the scene of woe :
 Matrons and maids, both sexes, every state,
 With tears lament the knight's untimely fate.
 Nor greater grief in falling Troy was seen
 For Hector's death, but Hector was not then.
 Old men with dust deformed their hoary hair ;
 The women beat their breasts, their cheeks they tear :
 Why wouldst thou go (with one consent they cry),
 When thou hadst gold enough, and Emily !

Dryden, you observe, exhibits various changes. Are they for the better or the worse ? In the first place, he introduces a new motive into the conduct of Arcite—remorse of conscience. When fate has declared against him, and he finds that he cannot enjoy the possession of the prize which he has wrongfully won, his eyes open upon his own injustice, and he acknowledges the prior right of Palamon, who first had seen Emelie.

Does this innovation make good an ethical want in the rough and unschooled original ? Or does it perplex the old heroic simplicity with a modern and needless refinement ? By right of arms, by gift of the king, with her own gentle consent, Emelie was Arcite's. Death unsinews the hand that held her against the world. Let a few winged moments fleet, and she is his no more. He bows, conquered by all-conquering, alone unconquerable necessity. His love, which had victoriously

expelled his cousin's from the field of debate, he carries with him to the melancholy Plutonic kingdom, and leaves the field of debate still—Palamon victor, and Emelie free. Really there seems to be something not only simpler in art, but more pathetic, and even morally greater, in the humble submission of the fierce and giant-like spirit to inevitable decree—in the spontaneous return of the pristine fraternal appreciation when death withdraws the disturbing force of rivalry—and in his voluntarily appointing, so far as he ventures to appoint, his brother in arms and his bride to each other's happiness—than in the inventive display of a compunction for which, as the world goes, there appears to be positively no use, and hardly clear room. Loftily viewing the case, a wrong had been intended by Arcite to Palamon, but no wrong done. He has been twice hacked and hewed a little—that is all; and it cannot be said that he has been robbed of her who would not have been his. Indeed, the current of destiny has so run, that the quarrel of the two noble kinsmen has brought, as apparently it alone could bring, the survivor to wedlock with his beloved. We suspect, then, that the attribution of the motive is equally modern with the style of the not ill-contrived witticism which accompanies the first mention of it—

"Conscience, that of all physic works the last,
Caused him to send for Emily in haste."

But that which, upon the general comparison of the two speeches, principally strikes us, is the great expansion, by the multiplying of the thoughts to which expression is given, by Dryden. With old Geoffrey, the weight of death seems actually to lie upon the tongue that speaks in few interrupted accents. Dryden's *Moribund* runs on, quite at his ease, in eloquent disquisition. Another unsatisfactory difference is the disappearing of that distinct, commanding purpose or plan, and the due proportion observed upon in the original. That mere cleaving desire to Emelie, felt through the first half in word after word gushing up from a heart in which life, but not love, ebbs, gets bewildered in the modern version among explications of the befallen unhappiness, and lost in a sort of argumentative lamentation. And do but just look how that "in his cold grave," the only word, one may say, in the whole allocution which does not expressly appertain to Emelie, and yet half belongs to her by contrast—is extended, in Dryden,

as if upon recollection of Claudio's complaint in "Measure for Measure," until, like that complaint, it becomes selfish.

But there is small pleasure in picking out the poetical misses of John Dryden. It was to be foreseen that he would be worsted in this place of the competition; for the pathetic was not his *forte*, and was Chaucer's. So, too, instead of the summary and concise commendation of his happier cousin to the future regard of the bereaved bride, so touching in Chaucer, there comes in, provoked by that unlucky repentance, an expatiating and arguing review of the now extinct quarrel, showing a liberty and vigour of thought that agree ill with the threatening cloud of dissolution, and somewhat overlay and encumber the proper business to which the dying man has now turned himself—made imperative by the occasion—the formal and energetic eulogy on Palamon. The praise, however, is bestowed at last, and handsomely.

Have we, think ye, gentle lovers of Chaucer, rightly understood the possibly somewhat obscure intention of the two verses at the beginning of our extract—

"But I bequethe the service of my gost
To you?"

We have accepted "service" in the sense which, agreeably to our erudition, it eminently holds in the old love-vocabulary—homage, devotion, LOVE; the pure and entire dedication by the lover of his whole being to his lady. In this meaning, the heart continually *serves*, if there should be no opportunity of rendering any useful offices. You will see that Dryden has taken the word in what strikes us as an inferior sense—namely, available service; but then his verses are exquisite. And why, gentle lovers of Chaucer, why think ye does the expiring Arcite, at that particular juncture of his address, crave of his heart's queen softly to take him in her arms? Is it not that he is then about pouring out into her ear his dying design for her happiness? Received so, the movement has great originality and an infinite beauty. His heart yearns the more towards her as he is on the point of giving utterance to his generous proposal. He will, by that act of love upon her part, and that mutual attitude of love, deepen the solemnity, truth, power, impression of his unexpected request. Will he perchance, too, approach her ear to his voice, that grows weaker and weaker?

The two verses appear by their wording to intimate something like all this.

"And softè take me in your armès twey,
For love of God, *and herkeneth what I sey.*"

If Chaucer had any such meaning, it vanishes wholly in Dryden's version.

On re-surveying the matter at last, we feel the more that the passing over of Emelie from the dead Arcite to the living Palamon, in Chaucer, is by much more poetical when viewed as the voluntary concession and gift of the now fully heroic Arcite, than as, in Dryden, the recovered right of the fortunate survivor. However, the speech, as Dryden has it, is vigorous, numerous, spirited, eloquent, touched with poetry, and might please you very well, did you not compare it with the singular truth, feeling, fitness of Chaucer's—that unparalleled picture of a manly, sorely-wrung, lovingly-provident spirit upon its bed of untimely death.

The process of dying has been considerably delineated by Chaucer. Death creeps from the feet upwards to the breast—it creeps up and possesses the arms. But the intellect which dwelled in the heart 'gan fail only when the very heart felt death. Then dimness fell upon the eyes, and the breath faltered. One more look—one more word—and the spirit has forsaken its tenement. Dryden generalizes all this particularity—and therein greatly errs. But the last four flowing verses of the death-scene are in his more inspired manner, and must be held good for redeeming a multitude of peccadilloes and some graver transgressions. Read them over again—

"Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,
Though less and less of Emily he saw;
So, speechless for a little space he lay;
Then grasp'd the hand he held, and sigh'd his soul away."

When years rolling have in a manner exhausted the tears due to the remembrance of the heroic Arcite, a parliament, held upon matters of public interest, gives occasion to Theseus of requiring the attendance of Palamon from Thebes to Athens. The benign monarch, however, is revolving affairs of nearer and more private concern. The national council is assembled; Palamon is in his place, and Emelie has been called into presence. His majesty puts on a very serious countenance, fixes his eyes, heaves a sigh, and begins

unfurthering his bosom of its concealed purposes. He "begins from the beginning" in this fashion:—

"When the First Mover established the great chain of love, in which he bound the four elements, the mighty ordering proceeded of high wisdom. The same author, himself inaccessible to alteration, has appointed to all natural things the law of transiency and succession. The kinds endure; the individuals pass away. Nature examples us with decay. Trees, rivers, mighty towns, wax and wane—much more we. All must die—the great and the small: and the wish to live is an impiety. Better it is to fall in the pride of strength and in the splendour of renown, than to droop through long years into the grave; and the friend who survives should rejoice in his friend's happy and honourable departure. Wherefore, then, shall we longer mourn for Arcite?" This is the copious preamble. The conclusion is more briefly dispatched. Emele must accept the hand of her faithful servant Palamon. He wants no persuasion; and the knot of matrimony happily ties up at last their destinies, wishes, and expectations, which the Tale in its progress has spun.

The royal harangue is long; and marked, doubtless, with a sort of artificial solemnity. However, it has a deliberative stateliness and a certain monarchical tone. *We* do not now, in the Speeches from the Throne, begin regularly from the Creation—but that is a refinement. There has been eloquence of which Chaucer's deep display of philosophy and high deduction of argument are no ill-conceived representation. There is a grandeur in the earthly king's grounding his counsels in those of the heavenly King; and in his blending his own particular act of exerted kingly sway into the general system of things in the universe. The turn from the somewhat magniloquent dissertation to the parties immediately interested—the gentle disposing, between injunction and persuasion, of Emele's will, and the frank call upon Palamon to come forward and take possession of his happiness, are natural, princely, and full of dramatic grace. Thus,—

CHAUCER.

Lo the oke that hath so long a norishing
 Fro the time that it ginneth first to spring,
 And hath so long a lif, as ye may see,
 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
 Considereth eke, how that the harde stone
 Under our feet, on which we trede and gon,

It wasteth as it lieth by the way;
 The brode river some time waxeth dry;
 The grete tounes see we wane and wende;
 Then may ye see that all things hath an end.
 Of man and woman see we wel also,
 That nedes in on of the termes two,
 That is to sayn, in youth or ellès age,
 He mote be ded, the king as shall a page;
 Som on his bed, some on the depè see,
 Som in the large field, as ye may see;
 Ther helpeth nought, all goth that ilke wey;
 Than may I say that allè things mote dey.
 What maketh this but Jèpiter the king?
 The which is prince, and cause of allè thing,
 Converting allè unto his propre will,
 From which it is derived, soth to telle.
 And herè againes no creature on live
 Of no degree avaieth for to strive.
 Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
 To maken virtue of necessite,
 And take it wel, that we may not eschewe,
 And namèly that to us all is dewe.
 And who so grutcheth ought, he doth folie,
 And rebel is to him that all may gie.
 And certainly a man hath most honour
 To dien in his excellence and flour,
 Whan he is siker of his goodè name.
 Than hath he don his friend, ne him, no shame;
 And glader ought his friend been of his deth
 Whan with honour is yelden up his breath,
 Than whan his name appalled is for age;
 For all foryetten is his vassalage.
 Than is it best, as for a worthy fame,
 To dien whan a man is best of name.
 The contrary of all this is wilfulnesse.
 Why grutchen we? Why have we heavinesse,
 That good Arcite, of chivalry the flour,
 Departed is, with dutes and honour,
 Out of foulè prison of this lif?
 Why grutchen here his cousin and his wif
 Of his welfare, that loven him so wel?
 Can he hem thank? Nay, God wot, never a del,
 That both his soulè, and eke himself offend,
 And yet they mow hir lustres not amend.
 What may I conclude of this longè serie,
 But after sorwe I rede us to be merie,
 And thanken Jupiter of all his grace,
 And er that we departen from this place,
 I rede that we make of sorwes two
 O parfit joyè lasting evermo;

And loketh now wher most sorwe is hercin,
Ther wol I first amenden and begin.

Sister (quod he), this is my full assent,
With all the avis here of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owen knight,
That serveth you with will, and herte and might,
And ever hath done, sin ye first him knew,
That ye shall of your grace upon him vew,
And taken him for husbond and for lord:
Lene me your hand, for this is oure accord.

Let see now of your womanly pitee.
He is a king's brother's sone pardee,
And though he were a pœur bachelere,
Sin he hath served you so many a yere,
And had for you so gret adversitie,
It moste ben considered, leveth me.
For gentil mercy oweth to passeen right.

Then sayd he thus to Palamon the knight:
I trow ther nedeth little sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing.
Cometh ner, and take your lady by the hond.

Betwixen hem was maked anon the bond,
That highte matrimoine or mariage,
By all the conseil of the baronage.
And thus with all blisse and melodie
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelie.

And God, that all this wide world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dere ybought.
For now is Palamon in all wele,
Living in blisse, in richisse, and in hele,
And Emelie him loveth so tendrely,
And he hire serveth all so gentilly,
That never was ther no word hem betwene
Of jalousie, ne of non other tene.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emelie,
And God save all this fayrè compaignie.

The whole oration is rendered by Dryden with zealous diligence in bringing out the sense into further effect, and with a magnificent sweep of composition. If there is in the fine original anything felt as a little too stiffly formal, this impression is wholly obliterated or lost in the streaming poetry of the translator. Dryden may not, on his own score, have been much of a philosopher; but he handles a philosophical thought in verse with a dexterity that is entirely his own. The sharpness and swiftness of intellectual power concurring in him, join so much ease with so much brevity, that the poetical vein flows on unhindered, even when involved with metaphysical notions and with scholastic recollections. The com-

parison of the following noble strain with the original now quoted, decisively and successfully shows the character of an embellishing transformation, which we have all along attributed to Dryden's treatment of Chaucer. The full thought of the original is often but as the seed of thought to the version, or at least the ungrown plant of the one throws out the luxuriance and majesty of leaves, blossoms, and branches in the other. The growth and decay of the oak in the two, and still more of the human being, are marked instances. Dryden does not himself acknowledge the bold license which he has used in regenerating; he does himself less than justice. The worth of his work is not the giving to modern England her ancient poet, without the trouble of acquiring his language, or of learning to sympathize with his manner. It would almost seem as if that were an enterprise which there is no accomplishing. Rightly to speak, it was not Dryden's. He really undertook, from a great old poem lying before him, to write a great modern poem, which he has done; and in the new Knight's Tale, we see Dryden, the great poet—we do not see Chaucer, the greater poet. But we see in it presumptive proof that the old poem worked from was great and interesting; and we must be lazy and unprofitable students if we do not, from the proud and splendid modernization, derive a yearning and a craving towards the unknown simple antique. Unknown to us, in our first studies, as we read upward from our own day into the past glories of our vernacular literature; but which, when, with gradually mounting courage, endeavour, and acquirement, we have made our way up so far, we find

“Worthy to have not remain'd so long unknown.”

So, Dryden has done honour and rendered service to his mighty predecessor—truer honour and better service—not by superseding, but by guiding and impelling towards the knowledge of the old Knight's Tale.

DRYDEN.

The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays,
Supreme in state, and in three more decays:
So wears the paving pebble in the street,
And towns and towers their fatal periods meet:
So rivers, rapid once, now naked lie,
Forsaken of their springs, and leave their channels dry:

So man, at first a drop, dilates with heat;
 Then form'd, the little heart begins to beat;
 Secret he feeds, unknowing in the cell;
 At length, for hatching ripe, he breaks the shell,
 And struggles into breath, and cries for aid;
 Then helpless in his mother's lap is laid.
 He creeps, he walks, and, issuing into man,
 Grudges their life, from whence his own began;
 Retchless of laws, affects to rule alone,
 Anxious to reign, and restless on the throne;
 First vegetive, then feels, and reasons last;
 Rich of three souls, and lives all three to waste.
 Some thus, but thousands more, in flower of age,
 For few arrive to run the latter stage.
 Sunk in the first, in battle some are slain,
 And others whelmed beneath the stormy main.
 What makes all this but Jupiter the king,
 At whose command we perish, and we spring?
 Then 'tis our best, since thus ordained to die,
 To make a virtue of necessity;
 Take what he gives, since to rebel is vain;
 The bad grows better, which we well sustain;
 And could we choose the time, and choose aright,
 'Tis best to die, our honour at the height.
 When we have done our ancestors no shame,
 But served our friends, and well secured our fame,
 Then should we wish our happy life to close,
 And leave no more for fortune to dispose.
 So should we make our death a glad relief
 From future shame, from sickness, and from grief;
 Enjoying, while we live, the present hour,
 And dying in our excellence and flower.
 Then round our death-bed every friend should run,
 And joyous of our conquest early won;
 While the malicious world, with envious tears,
 Should grudge our happy end, and wish it theirs.
 Since then our Arcite is with honour dead,
 Why should we mourn that he so soon is freed,
 Or call untimely what the gods decreed?
 With grief as just, a friend may be deplored,
 From a foul prison to free air restored,
 Ought he to thank his kinsman or his wife,
 Could tears recall him into wretched life?
 Their sorrow hurts themselves; on him is lost;
 And worse than both, offends his happy ghost.
 What then remains, but after past annoy,
 To take the good vicissitude of joy;
 To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
 Possess our souls, and while we live, to live?
 Ordain we then two sorrows to combine,
 And in one point the extremes of grief to join;

That thence resulting joy may be renewed,
As jarring notes in harmony conclude.
Then I propose, that Palamon shall be
In marriage joined with beauteous Emily;
For which already I have gain'd the assent
Of my free people in full parliament.
Long love to her has borne the faithful knight,
And well deserved, had fortune done him right;
'Tis time to mend her fault, since Emily,
By Arcite's death, from former vows is free.—
If you, fair sister, ratify the accord,
And take him for your husband and your lord,
'Tis no dishonour to confer your grace
On one descended from a royal race;
And were he less, yet years of service past,
From grateful souls, exact reward at last.
Pity is heaven's and your's; nor can she find
A throne so soft as in a woman's mind.—

He said: she blushed; and, as o'erawed by might,
Seem'd to give Theseus what she gave the knight.
Then, turning to the Theban, thus he said:—
Small arguments are needful to persuade
Your temper to comply with my command:
And, speaking thus, he gave Emilia's hand.
Smiled Venus to behold her own true knight
Obtain the conquest, though he lost the fight;
And blessed, with nuptial bliss, the sweet laborious night.
Eros and Anteros, on either side,
One fired the bridegroom, and one warm'd the bride;
And long-attending Hymen, from above,
Showered on the bed the whole Idalian grove.
All of a tenor was their after-life,
No day discolour'd with domestic strife;
No jealousy, but mutual truth believed,
Secure repose, and kindness undeceived.
Thus Heaven, beyond the compass of his thought,
Sent him the blessing he so dearly bought.
So may the Queen of Love long duty bless,
And all true lovers find the same success.

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The time is come in which a curious and instructive chapter in English criticism—a long one, too, possibly—might be written on the Versification of Chaucer, and upon the history of opinions respecting it. Tyrwhitt laid the basis, in his edition of the *Canterbury Tales*—the only work of the ancestral poet that can yet fairly be said to have found an editor—by a text, of which the admirable diligence, fidelity, skill, and sound discretion, wrung energetic and unqualified praise from the illaudatory pen of Ritson. But the Grammar of Chaucer has yet to be fully drawn out. The profound labours of the

mental scholars, late or living, on the language that was the native mother to our own, the Anglo-Saxon, makes that which was in Tyrwhitt's day a thing impossible to be done, almost an easy adventure. Accomplished, it would at once considerably rectify even Tyrwhitt's text. The Rules of the Verse, which are many, and which require a systematic and judicious framing, no less than a sensitive musical ear in the monarch, would follow of themselves. In the mean time, a few observations, for which the materials lie at hand, are called in this place, by the collision of the two great names, Chaucer and Dryden. Dryden says—

“The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but it is like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*. They who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continues so, even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lidgate and Gower, his cotemporaries:—there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. It is true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine; but this opinion is not worth confuting; it is so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader that equality of numbers, in every verse which we call heroic, was either not known, or not always practised in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace; even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being; and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared.”

Strange to say, by the changing pronunciation of the language, there grew with time upon the minds of men a doubt, whether or no the Father of our Poetry wrote *verse*! The tone of Dryden, in the above passage, when animadverting upon Spaght, shows that the editor, in standing up for ten

syllables, put forth an unusual opinion; whilst the poet, in alleging the deficiency, manifestly agrees with the opinion of the antique versification that had become current in the world. *He* taxes Chaucer, it will be observed, with going wrong on the side of deficiency, not of excess; nor does he blame the interchange even of deficiency and excess, as if the syllables were often nine and often eleven. His words leave no room for misconception of their meaning. They are as definite as language can supply. "Thousands of the verses are lame for want of half a foot, or of a whole one." In this sense, then, he intends: "That equality of numbers, in every verse which we call heroic, was either not known, or not always practised in Chaucer's age."

But as Dryden has been severely taken to task by some insignificant writers of our day for the above passage, let us, not for his vindication, but excuse, take a moment's glance at Speght's edition (1602), which, in Dryden's day, was in high esteem, and had been at first published on the recommendation of Speght's "assured and ever-loving friend," the illustrious Francis Beaumont. In his preface, Speght says—"and his verses, although in divers places they may seem to us to stand of unequal measures, yet a skilful reader that can scan them in their nature, shall find it otherwise. And if a verse here and there fall out a syllable shorter or longer than another, I rather ascribe it to the negligence and rape of Adam Scrivener, than to any uncounting or oversight in the Author. For how fearful he was to have his works miswritten, or his verse mismeasured, may appear in the end of his fifth book of *Troilus and Criseide*, where he writeth thus:—

'And for there is so great diversitie,
In English and in writing of our tongue,
So pray I God, that none miswrite thee,
Ne thee mismeasure for default of tongue,' &c.

How Speght made up the measure to his own satisfaction does not appear; nor what those methods of pronunciation may have been which Dryden tried, and which left some thousand verses deficient by half a foot, or a foot.

But believing Speght's text to be accurate, Dryden could not but believe in the artlessness and irregularity of Chaucer's versification. Speght's text is most inaccurate, and altogether undeserving of his own very high opinion, thus expressed in

the Dedication to Sir Robert Cecil—"Now, therefore, that both by old written copies, and by Master William Thynn's praiseworthy labours, I have reformed the whole worke, whereby Chaucer for the most part is restored to his owne antiquitie." In *his* Chaucer, Dryden met everywhere such lines as these—

"When that April with his shours sote."

"And small foules maken melodie
That slepen all night with open eie."

"It befell that season on a day."

"Ready to wend in my pilgrimage."

"That toward Canterbury would ride—
The chambres and stables weren wide."

"To tell you all the condition."

"Full worthy was he in his lords warre."

"Aboven all nations in Pruce."

"For to tell you of his array."

We suspect that there was all along a lingering tradition amongst the learned about the virtue of the Mute E's. Vestiges of the use occur in the poets of Elizabeth's time. Wallis, the celebrated grammarian, says, that "with our early poets it is found that that (final) E did or did not constitute an additional syllable, just as the structure of the verse required it." Urry, whose edition of Chaucer was published, not long after his death, in 1721, knows for vocal the termination in ES, of genitive singular and of the plural—also the past tense and participle in ED, which, however, can hardly be thought much of, as it is a power over one mute E that we retain in use to this day. The final E, too, he marks for a syllable where he finds one wanted, but evidently without any grammatical reason. Urry was an unfortunate editor. Truly does Tyrwhitt say of him, that "his design of restoring the metre of Chaucer by a collation of MSS., was as laudable as his execution of it has certainly been unsuccessful." The natural causes of this ill success are thus severely and distinctly stated: "The strange license in which he appears to have indulged himself, of lengthening and shortening Chaucer's words according to his own fancy, and of even adding words of his own, without giving his readers the least notice, has made the text of Chaucer in his edition by far the

worst that was ever published." One is not surprised when Tyrwhitt, the model of a gentlemanly and scholarly editor, a very pattern of temperate, equitable, and merciful criticism, cannot refrain from closing his preface with this extinguishing censure of his wilful predecessor—"Mr. Urry's edition should never be opened by any one for the purpose of reading Chaucer."

Morell, a scholar, published in 1737 the Prologue and the Knight's Tale—and he, too, marked at need the Mute E's in his text, but by what rule Tyrwhitt does not intimate, nor do we now distinctly recollect. He courageously holds that the numbers of Chaucer "are always musical, whether they want or exceed the complement." But that cannot well be; for except in very peculiar cases—such, for example, as the happy line, "Gingling in the whistling wind full clear"—if the MS. have it so,—a line of nine syllables only must be a *lame* one—and their frequent recurrence would be the destruction of all music.

Tyrwhitt urges the reason of pronouncing the final E; namely, that it remains to us from a language in which it formed a syllable. So from the Norman French we have *fac-e*, *host-e*, *chang-e*, &c. This is basing the matter on its true ground. It must, however, be acknowledged with some sorrow, that this well-schooled, clear-minded, and most laborious editor did not feel himself bound, for the behoof of his author, to master, as far as the philology of the day might have enabled him, the Saxon tongue itself, and learn from the fountain what might, and what could not be—the language of Chaucer. Imperfect as the study of the Anglo-Saxon then was, he would thus have possessed a needful mastery over the manuscripts, upon which, as it was, he wholly depended; and he would have been saved from some unguarded philological assertions and whimsical speculations. Wanting this guidance, the work, so well executed as it is, is a monument only the more to be wondered at of his indefatigable industry and extraordinary good sense.

Upon anywhere opening Chaucer, of the many seemingly defective verses (Dryden in saying thousands may have exaggerated the number even in Speght), by far the greater part will be found recoverable to measure by that restitution of the Mute E which we since, too exclusively perhaps, connect with the name of Tyrwhitt. The confidence felt in his text, however—the only one upon which a metrical scholar dares

work—in some sort justifies the honour. Meanwhile, this metrical theory, from his time, has been generally received; and the renown of the founder of our poetry settled on all the wider and firmer basis, when he appears as the earliest skilled artificer of the verse itself—the ten-syllabled or now national verse, of Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope.

One starts, therefore, to find a name of such distinction as the late Laureate's formally opposed to Tyrwhitt, and committed to the opinion which may seem to have been Dryden's, that the verse of Chaucer is "rhythmical, not metrical." This hardly self-explicating distinction of Dr. Geo. Fred. Nott's, Southey in his *Life of Cowper* has explained in set terms—a verse for which the number of beats or accents is ruled is rhythmical—for example, the verse of Coleridge's *Christabel*. In that beautiful poem, the verse is fixed at four beats or accents, but is free syllabled, having six, seven, ten, twelve or fourteen. Southey cannot believe that the prudent and practical Chaucer would have placed his verse, intended for general reception, in the jeopardy of a reader's discretion for determining when the verse required the sounding, and when the silence, of a vowel, by its nature free to be sounded or left silent, as exigency might require. But he misapprehends the proposed remedy; and the discretion which he supposes is not given. In the two languages from which ours is immediately derived, the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman-French, there are found many final syllables, entirely dropped in our pronunciation, and many of them in our writing, but which in the time of Chaucer were all still written, and all with the same vowel E. The metrical hypothesis, to which Tyrwhitt's labours gave a lustre, much heightened by the Anglo-Saxon studies abroad and at home of the present century, bears—first, that in the language of Chaucer's day these syllables were still audible; and secondly, that Chaucer consequently employed them in his verse, like any other syllables, with the due metrical value:—herein not, as the Laureate thought, overruling, but conforming himself to the use of his mother tongue. To this more than plausible view, which, if the late studies that have been taken in the intelligence of Alfred's speech had been made in Tyrwhitt's day, would not have waited till now for its full establishment, no objection has yet been raised that seems to deserve the slightest attention. The Laureate's vanish upon the mere statement. For Dr. Nott, on whom he triumphantly builds, and whose proofs he seems to adopt—he

is the weakest and most wrong-headed of all possible proser ; and, what is more, his opinions, if they deserve the name, differ *toto cælo* from Southey's. For we have seen that Southey's ground of distinction is the number of syllables unrestrained or varying, as in *Christabel*. But Nott says repeatedly, that the number of syllables is fixed, namely, to ten ; and of the five beats he says not a word.

To extricate Nott's argument (in his edition of Surrey) from entanglement would not repay a tithe of the trouble ; suffice it to say that he holds that as English verse, before Chaucer, was rhythmical, it is not likely that Chaucer all at once made it metrical. We answer first—the question is of a fact offering its own evidence, not of an anterior likelihood. Secondly—Tyrwhitt's theory that Chaucer, from his intimacy with the more advanced French and Italian poetry, adopted their measure, and stamped art upon a poetry till then rude and helpless, has high natural probability, and agrees to the vehement early extollings of Chaucer as a sovereign master of art. Thirdly—we desire a better proof and explanation of the difference between rhythmical and metrical verse than Dr. Nott has given, who has placed some extracts from these anterior poets at the side of some from Chaucer which prove just nothing. Fourthly, there *was* metrical verse in England before Chaucer, eight-syllabled and *fifteen*-syllabled—if no others. Mr. Hallam (*Introduction to the Literature of Europe*) writes with more commendation of Dr. Nott's accomplishments than they merit ; but in the following excellent passage he shows his usual knowledge of his subject, and his usual judgment.

“It had been supposed to be proved by Tyrwhitt, that Chaucer's lines are to be read metrically, in ten or eleven syllables, like the Italian, and, as I apprehend, the French of his time. For this purpose, it is necessary to presume that many terminations, now mute, were syllabically pronounced ; and where verses prove refractory after all our endeavours, Tyrwhitt has no scruple in declaring them corrupt. It may be added, that Gray, before the appearance of Tyrwhitt's essay on the versification of Chaucer, had adopted without hesitation the same hypothesis. But, according to Dr. Nott, the verses of Chaucer, and of all his successors down to Surrey, are merely rhythmical, to be read by cadence, and admitting of considerable variety in the number of syllables, though ten may be the more frequent. In the manuscripts

of Chaucer, the line is always broken by a cæsura in the middle, which is pointed out by a virgule; and this is preserved in the early editions down to that of 1532. They come near, therefore, to the short Saxon line, differing chiefly by the alternate rhyme, which converts two verses into one. He maintains that a great many lines of Chaucer cannot be read metrically, though harmonious as verses of cadence: This rhythmical measure he proceeds to show in Hoccleve, Lydgate, Hawes, Barclay, Skelton, and even Wyatt; and thus concludes, that it was first abandoned by Surrey, in whom it very rarely occurs. This hypothesis, it should be observed, derives some additional plausibility from a passage in Gascoyne's 'Notes of instruction concerning the making of verse or rhyme in English,' printed in 1575. 'Whosoever do peruse and well consider his (Chaucer's) works, he shall find that, although his lines are not always of one selfsame number of syllables, yet being read by one that hath understanding, the longest verse, and that which hath most syllables in it, will fall (to the ear) correspondent unto that which hath fewest syllables; and likewise that which hath fewest syllables shall be found yet to consist of words that have such natural sound, as may seem equal in length to a verse which hath many more syllables of lighter accents.'

"A theory so ingeniously maintained, and with so much induction of examples, has naturally gained a good deal of credit. I cannot, however, by any means concur in the extension given to it. Pages may be read in Chaucer, and still more in Dunbar, where every line is regularly and harmoniously decasyllabic; and though the cæsura may perhaps fall rather more uniformly than it does in modern verse, it would be very easy to find exceptions, which could not acquire a rhythmical cadence by any artifice of the reader. The deviations from the normal type, or decasyllable line, were they more numerous than, after allowance for the license of pronunciation, as well as the probable corruption of the text, they appear to be, would not, I conceive, justify us in concluding that it was disregarded. These aberrant lines are much more common in the dramatic blank verse of the seventeenth century. They are, doubtless, vestiges of the old rhythmical forms; and we may readily allow that English versification had not, in the fifteenth or even sixteenth centuries, the numerical regularity of classical or Italian metre. In the ancient ballads, Scots and English, the substitution of

the anapæst for the iambic foot, is of perpetual recurrence, and gives them a remarkable elasticity and animation; but we never fail to recognize a uniformity of measure, which the use of nearly equipollent feet cannot, on the strictest metrical principles, be thought to impair."

Mr. Guest, in his work, of which we hope ere long to give an account, brings to the story of English verse far more extensive research than had hitherto been bestowed upon it; and that special scholarship which was needed—the Anglo-Saxon language, learned in the new continental school of Rask and Grimm. His examination of our subject merges in a general history of the Language, viewed as a metrical element or material; and hence his exposition, which we rapidly collect *seriatim*, is plainly different in respect of both order and fullness from what it would have been, had the illustration of Chaucer been his main purpose. He follows down the gradual Extinction of Syllables; and in this respect, our anciently syllabled, now mute E, takes high place, and falls first under his consideration.

This now silent or vanished Vowel occurred heretofore, with metrical power, in adopted FRENCH Substantives, as—eloquenc-*e*, maladi-*e*; and in their plurals, as—maladi-*es*. And in Adjectives of the same origin, as—larg-*e*.

It remained from several parts of the ANGLO-SAXON grammar.—From A, E, U, endings of Anglo-Saxon substantives—as nam-*a*, nam-*e*; tim-*a*, tim-*e*; mon-*a* (the moon), mon-*e*; sunn-*e* (the sun), sonn-*e*; heort-*e* (the heart), hert-*e*; ear-*e* (the ear), er-*e*; scol-*u* (school), scol-*e*; luf-*u*, lov-*e*; sceam-*u*, sham-*e*; lag-*a*, law-*e*; sun-*u* (a son), son-*e*; wud-*u* (a wood), wod-*e*.—(To Mr. Guest's three vowels, add O:—as bræd-*o* (breadth) bred-*e*.)—From the termination THE; as—streng-*the*; yow-*the*.—From a few adjectives ending in *e*; as—getrew-*e*, trew-*e*; new-*e*, new-*e*.—From adverbs, formed by the same vowel from adjectives; as from beorht (bright), is made, in Anglo-Saxon, beorht-*e* (brightly), remaining with Chaucer, as bright-*e*.—Inflexion produces the final E. In substantives, the prevalent singular dative of the mother speech was in E. Chaucer, now and then, seems to present us with a dative; as in the second verse of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, from rot (root), rot-*e*. And Mr. Guest thinks that he has found ONE instance of a genitive plural E from A; namely, from the earlier ath (an oath), genitive plural, ath-*a*; with Chaucer—oth, oth-*e*.

The German family of languages exhibits a fine and bold peculiarity—a double declension of its Adjectives, depending on a condition of syntax. The Anglo-Saxon adjective, in its ordinary (or, as grammarians have called it, Indefinite) declension, makes the nominative plural for all the genders in E; and this remains as the regular plural termination of the adjective to Chaucer. Thus we have, in the more ancient language—eald; plural, eald-e; with Chaucer—old; plural, old-e, &c.

The rule of the extraordinary (or Definite) declension, is thus generally given by Mr. Guest for Chaucer. "When the adjective follows the definite article, or the definite pronoun, *this*, *that*, or any one of the possessive pronouns—*his*, *her*, &c.—it takes what is called its definite form."—(Vol. i. p. 92.) From the Anglo-Saxon definite declension (running through three genders, five cases, and two numbers), remains, to the language that arose after the Conquest, one final E. *E. g.* Indefinite—strong; definite, strong-e;—indefinite—high; definite—high-e.

The verb ends the first person singular, and the three persons plural, of the present tense, and makes imperative and infinitive in E. The past tense generally ends in DE or EDE; (Mr. Guest has forgotten TE;) sometimes in ED.

As for those two principal endings, the genitive singular in ES, which is the Anglo-Saxon termination retained, and the plural in ES, which is the Anglo-Saxon ending obscured—they happen hardly to fall under Mr. Guest's particular regard; but it is easily understood that the Anglo-Saxon *hlaforð* (lord), gen. sing. *hlaforð-es*, had, in Chaucer's day, become *lord*, *lord-es*; and that *scur*, (shower,) plural *scur-as*, of our distant progenitors had bequeathed to his verse—*shour*, *shour-es*.

Legitimate skepticism surely ceases when it thus appears that ignorance alone has hastily understood that this vowel, extant in this or that word, with a quite alien meaning and use—(*e. g.*, for lengthening a foregoing vowel—softening an antecedent consonant),—or with none, and through the pure casualty of negligence or of error, might at any time be pressed irregularly into metrical service. Assuredly Chaucer never used such blind and wild license of straightening his measure; but an instructed eye sees in the *Canterbury Tales*—and in all his poetry of which the text is incorrupt—the uniform application of an intricate and thoroughly critical

rule, which fills up by scores, by hundreds, or by thousands, the time-wronged verses of "The Great Founder" to true measure and true music.

To sum up in a few words our own views—First, if you take no account of the mute E, the great majority of Chaucer's verses in the only justifiable text—Tyrwhitt's *Canterbury Tales*—are in what we commonly call the TEN syllabled Iambic metre.

Secondly, if you take account of the metrical E, the great majority of them appear, if you choose so to call them, as ELEVEN syllabled Iambic verses, or as the common heroic measure with a supernumerary terminal syllable.

Thirdly, if you take no account of the disputed E, a very large number of the verses, but less apparently than the majority, appear as wanting internally one or two syllables.

Fourthly, if you take account of the said troublesome E, almost universally these deficient measures become filled up to the due complement—become decasyllabic or hendecasyllabic, as the case may be.

Fifthly, if you consent to take account of this grammatical metrical E, no inconsiderable number of the verses—ten-syllabled or eleven-syllabled, by technical computation—acquire one or two supernumerary syllables distributed, if one may so speak, *within* the verse—and to be viewed as enriching the harmony without distorting or extending the measure, after the manner of the *Paradise Lost*.

Finally, (for the present,) whether the verses in general fall under our usual English scheme of the one-syllabled ending, or end, as the Italian for the most part do, dissyllabically, has been disputed by those who agree in the recognition of the metrical E. To wit—shall the final E of Mr. Guest's rule, ending the verse, and where it would, consequently, make a hypercatalectic eleventh syllable, still be pronounced—as Tyrwhitt, although not anxiously, contends? If the grammatical rule is imperative within the verse, as much, one would think, must it be so at its termination. That Chaucer admits the doubled ending we see by numerous unequivocal instances from all moods of the verse, mirthful and solemn; these show a versification friendly to the doubled ending; and must go far to remove any scruple of admitting Tyrwhitt's conception of it as generally hendecasyllabic.

Let the position of Chaucer in the history of his art be considered, and it will be seen that those who maintain a syste-

matic art in him have a relief from objections greater than those who should inquire concerning perhaps any other poet. In the formation of his verse, and the lifting up of a rude language, more than Dante himself, a creator! What wonder, then, if he should sometimes make mistakes, and that some inconsistencies remain at last irreducible? If the method undertaken draws the irreducible cases into a narrower and a narrower compass, that sufficiently justifies the theory of the method against all gainsayers.

This copious, and possibly tedious grammatical display of this once active metrical element, was forced from us as the only proper answer to the doubt revived in our own day on the versification of Chaucer. We are too prone to believe that our forefathers were as rude as their speech, and their speech as they; but this multitude of grammatical delicacies, retained for centuries after the subjection of the native language by conquest, and systematically applied in the versification of the great old poet, shows a feeling of language, and an authentic stamp of art, that claim the most genial and sympathizing respect of a refined posterity, to their not wholly unrefined, more heroic ancestors.

SUPPLEMENT TO DRYDEN ON CHAUCER.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

FROM the grand achievements of Glorious John, one experiences a queer revulsion of the currency in the veins in passing to the small doings of Messrs. Betterton, Ogle, and Co., in 1737 and 1741; and again, to the still smaller of Mr. Lipscomb in 1795, in the way of modernizations of Chaucer. Who was Mr. Betterton, nobody, we presume, now knows; assuredly he was not Pope, though there is something silly to that effect in Joseph Warton, which is repeated by Malone. "Mr. Harte assured me," saith Dr. Joseph, "that he was convinced by some circumstances which Fenton had communicated to him, that Pope wrote the characters that make the introduction (the Prologue) to the Canterbury Tales, published under the name of Betterton." Betterton is bitter bad; Ogle, "*wersh* as could parritch without sawte!" Lipscomb is a jewel. In a postscript to his preface he says, "I have barely time here, the tales being already almost all printed off, to apologize to the reader for having inserted my own translation of the Nun's Priest's Tale, instead of that of Dryden; but the fact is, *I did not know that Dryden's version existed*; for, having undertaken to complete those of the Canterbury Tales which were wanting in Ogle's collection, and the tale in question *not being in that collection*, I proceeded to supply it, having never, till very lately, strange as it may seem, *seen the volume of Dryden's Fables in which it may be found!*"

It is diverting to hear the worthy who, in 1795, had never seen Dryden's Fables, offering to the public the first completed collection of the Canterbury Tales in a modern version, "under the reasonable confidence that the improved taste in poetry, and the extended cultivation of that, in common with all the other elegant arts, which so strongly characterizes the present day, will make the lovers of verse look up to the old

bard, the father of English poetry, with a veneration proportioned to the improvements they have made in it." It grieves him to think that the language in which Chaucer wrote "has decayed from under him." That reason alone, he says, can justify the attempt of exhibiting him in a modern dress; and he tells us that so faithfully has he adhered to the great original, that they who have not given their time to the study of the old language, "must either find a true likeness of Chaucer exhibited in this version, or they will find it nowhere else." With great solemnity he says, "Thence I have imposed it on myself as a duty somewhat sacred, to deviate from my original as little as possible in the sentiment, and have often in the language adopted his own expressions, the simplicity and effect of which have always forcibly struck me, *wherever the terms he uses (and that happens not unfrequently) are intelligible to modern ears.*" Yes—Guilielme Lipscomb, thou wert indeed a jewel.

Happy would he have been to accompany his version of Chaucer with notes. "But though the version itself has been an agreeable and easy rural occupation, yet in a remote village, near 250 miles from London, the very books, *trifling as they may seem*, to which it would be necessary to refer to illustrate the manners of the 14th century, were not to be procured; and parochial and other engagements would not admit of absence sufficient to consult them where they are to be found; it is not therefore for want of deference to the opinions of those who have recommended a body of notes, that they do not accompany these Tales." Yes—Guilielme, thou wert a jewel.

It is, however, but too manifest from his alleged versions, that not only did Mr. Lipscomb of necessity eschew the perusal of "the books, *trifling as they may seem*, to which it would be necessary to refer to illustrate the manners of the 14th century," but that he continued to his dying day almost as ignorant of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales as of Dryden's Fables.

In his preface he tells one very remarkable falsehood. "The Life of Chaucer, and the Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales, are taken from the valuable edition of his original works published by Mr. Tyrwhitt." The Introductory Discourse is so taken; but it is plain that poor, dear, fibbing Willy Lipscomb had not looked into it, for it contradicts throughout all the statements in the life of Chaucer, which is

not from Tyrwhitt, but clumsily cribbed piecemeal by Willy himself from that rambling and inaccurate one by a Mr. Thomas in Urry's edition. Lipscomb is lying on our table, and we had intended to quote a few specimens of him and his predecessor Ogle; but another volume that had fallen aside a year or two ago, has of itself mysteriously reappeared—and a few words of it in preference to other “haverers.”

Mr. Horne, the author of “*The False Medium*,” “*Orion*,” the “*Spirit of the Age*,” and some other clever brochures in prose and in verse, in the laboured rather than elaborate introduction to “*The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, modernized*,” (1841), by Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, Robert Bell, Thomas Powell, Elizabeth Barrett, and Zachariah Azed, gives us some threescore pages on Chaucer's versification; but, though they have an imposing air at first sight, on inspection they prove stark-naught. He seems to have a just enough general notion of the principle of the verse in the *Canterbury Tales*; but with the many ways of its working—the how, the why, and the wherefore—he is wholly unacquainted, though he dogmatizes like a doctor. He soon makes his escape from the real difficulties with which the subject is beset, and mounds away at immense length and width about what he calls “the secret of Chaucer's rhythm in his heroic verse, which has been the baffling subject of so much discussion among scholars, a trifling increase in the syllables occasionally introduced for variety, and founded upon the same laws of contraction by apostrophe, syncope, &c., as those followed by all modern poets; but employed in a more free and varied manner, all the words being fully written out, the vowels sounded, and not subjected to the disruption of inverted commas, as used in after times.” This “secret” was patent to all the world before Mr. Horne took pen in hand, and his eternal blazon of it is too much now for ears of flesh and blood. The modernized versions, however, are respectably executed—Leigh Hunt's admirably; and we hope for another volume. But Mr. Horne himself must be more careful in his future modernizations. The very opening of the Prologue is not happy.

In Chaucer it runs thus:—

“Whannè that April with his shoures sote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in swiche licour,
Of whiche vertue engendered is the flour;
When Zephyrus eke with his sote brethe,
Enspired hath in every holt and helme

The tender croppès, and the yongè sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfè cours yronne,
 And smalè foulès maken melodie,
 That slepen allè night with open eye,
 So priketh hem nature in hire corages;
 Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
 And palmeres for to seken strangè strondes.
 To servè halwes couthe in sondry loades," &c.

Thus modernized by Mr. Horne:—

"When that sweet April showers with downward shoot
 The drought of March have pierc'd into the root,
 And bathed every vein with liquid power,
 Whose virtue rare engendereth the flower;
 When Zephyrus also with his fragrant breath
 Inspired hath in every grove and heath
 The tender shoots of green, and the young sun,
 Hath in the Ram one half his journey run,
 And small birds in the trees make melody,
 That sleep and dream all night with open eye;
 So nature stirs all energies and ages
 That folk are bent to go on pilgrimages, &c.

Look back to Chaucer's own lines, and you will see that Mr. Horne's variations are all for the worse. How flat and tame "sweet April showers," in comparison with "April with his shoures sote." In Chaucer the month comes boldly on, in his own person—in Mr. Horne he is diluted into his own showers. 'Tis ominous thus to stumble on the threshold. "Downward shoot" is very bad indeed in itself, and all unlike the natural strength of Chaucer. "Liquid power" is even worse and more unlike; and most tautological the "virtue of power." In Chaucer the virtue is in the "licour." "Rare" is poorly dropped in to fill up. Chaucer purposely uses "sotè" twice—and the repetition tells. Mr. Horne must needs change it into "fragrant," "In the trees" is not in Chaucer—for he knew that "smalè foulès" shelter in the "hethe" as well as in the "holt"—among broom and bracken, and heath and rushes. Chaucer does not *say*, as Mr. Horne does, that the birds *dream*—he leaves you to think for yourself whether they do so or not, while sleeping with open eye all night. Such conjectural emendations are injurious to Chaucer. We presume Mr. Horne believes he has authority for applying "so pricketh hem nature in hire corages" to the folks that "longen to go on pilgrimages"—and not to the "smalè foulès." Or is it intended for a happy innovation? To us *it seems* an unhappy blunder—taking away a fine touch of

nature from Chaucer, and hardening it into horn; while "all energies and ages" is indeed a free and affected version of "corages." "For to wander thro'," is a mistranslation of "to seken;" and to "sing the holy mass," is not the meaning of to "serve halwes couthe," i. e., to worship saints known, &c.

Turning over a couple of leaves, we behold a modernization of the antique with a vengeance—

"His son, a young squire, with him there I saw,
A lover and a lusty bachelor! (aw) (ah!)
With locks crisp curl'd, as they'd been laid in press,
Of twenty year of age he was, I guess."

Chaucer never once in all his writings thus rhymes off two consecutive couplets in one sentence so slovenly, as with "I saw," and "I guess." But Mr. Horne is so enamoured "with the old familiar faces" of pet cockneyisms, that he must have his wift of them. Of the same squire, Chaucer says—

"Of his stature he was of *even length*;"

and Mr. Horne translates the words into—

"He was in stature of the common length."

They mean "well proportioned." Of this young squire Chaucer saith—

"So hote he loved, that by nightertale
He slep no more than doth the nightingale."

We all know how the nightingale employs the night—and here it is implied that so did the lover. Mr. Horne spoils all by an affected prettiness suggested by a misapplied passage in Milton.

Chaucer says of the Prioress—

"Full well she sang the service divine
Entuned in hire nose ful sweetly."

Mr. Horne must needs say—

"Entuned in her nose with *accent sweet*."

The accent, to our ears, is lost in the pious snivel—pardon the somewhat unclerical word.

Chaucer says of her—

"Fulsemely after hire meat she raught,"

which Mr. Horne improves into—

"And for her meat
Full seemly bent she forward on her seat."

Chaucer says—

"And *peined hire* to contrefeten chere
Of court, and ben astatelich of manere,
And to be holden digne of reverence."

That is, she took pains to imitate the manners of the court, &c.; whereas Mr. Horne, with inconceivable ignorance of the meaning of words that occur in Chaucer a hundred times, writes "*it gave her pain*, to counterfeit the ways of Court," thereby reversing the whole picture.

"And French she spake full fayre and fetisly,"

he translates "full properly *and neat*!" Dryden rightly calls her "the mincing Prioress;" Mr. Horne wrongly says, "she was evidently one of the most high-bred and refined ladies of her time."

Chaucer says of that "manly man," the Monk—

"Ne that a monk, when he is rekkeless,
Is like to a fish that is waterless :
This is to say, a monk out of his cloistre.
This ilkè text held he not worth an oistre."

Mr. Horne here modernizeth thus—

"Or that a monk beyond his bricks and *mortar*,
Is like a fish without a drop of *water*,
That is to say, a monk out of his cloister."

There can be no mortar without water, but the words do not rhyme except to Cockney ears, though the blame lies at the door of the mouth. "Bricks and mortar" is an odd and somewhat vulgar version of "rekkeless;" and to say that a monk "beyond his bricks and mortar" is a monk "out of his cloister," is not in the manner of Chaucer, or of anybody else.

Chaucer says slyly of the Frere, that

"He hadde ymade ful many a mariage
Of yongè women, at his owen coste;"

and Mister Horne brazen-facedly,

"Full many a marriage had he brought to bear,
For women young, and *paid the cost with sport*."

O fie, Mister Horne! To hide our blushes, will no maiden for a moment lend us her fan? We cover our face with our hands.—Of this same Frere, Mr. Horne, in his introduction,

when exposing the faults of another translator, says that "Chaucer shows us the quaint begging rogue playing his harp among a crowd of admiring auditors, and *turning up his eyes* with an attempted expression of religious enthusiasm;" but Chaucer does no such thing, nor was the Frere given to any such practice.

Of the Clerk of Oxenford, Chaucer says he "looked holwe, and thereto soberly." Mr. Horne needlessly adds "ill-fed." Chaucer says—

"Full threadbare was his overest courtsey."

Mr. Horne modernizes it into—

"His uppermost short cloak *was a bare thread.*"

Why exaggerate so? Chaucer says—

"But all that he might of *his frendes hente*.
On bokës and lerning he it spente."

Mr. Horne says—

"But every farthing that his friends e'er *lent.*"

They did not *lend*, they gave outright to the poor scholar. The Reve's Prologue opens thus in Chaucer—

"Whan folk han laughed at this nice cas
Of Absalom and *hensy* Nicholas."

Mr. Horne says—

"Of Absalom and *credulous* Nicholas."

He manifestly mistakes the sly scholar for the credulous carpenter, whom on the tenderest point he outwitted! To those who know the nature of the story, the blunder is extreme.

What is to be thought of such rhymes as these?

"And for to drink strong wine as red as *blood*,
Then would he jest, and shout as he were *mad.*"

"Towards the mill, the bay nag in his *hand*
The miller sitting by the fire they *found.*"

"And on she went, till she the cradle *found*,
While through the dark still groping with her *hand.*"

These, to our ears, are not happy modernizations of Chaucer. Here come a few more Cockneyisms.

"Alas! our warden's palfrey it is *gone*.
Allen at once forgot both meal and *corn.*"

"Allen stole back, and thought ere that it dawned,
I will creep in by John that lieth forlorn."

"Far, from the town Arrivagus was gone,
But to herself she spoke thus, all *ferlorn*."

"Aurelia, thinking of his unbalance gone,
Curseth the time that ever he was *born*."

"An arm-brace wore he that was rich and broad,
And by his side a buckler and a *sword*."

"Now grant my ship, that some smooth haven win *her*;
I follow Statius first, and then *Carina*."

Alas! this worst of all is Elizabeth Barrett's! "Well of
English *undefiled*!"

In Chaucer we have—

"A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, ware and wise,
That often hadde yben at the *Parvis*."

Mr. Horne gives us—

"A Sergeant of the Law, wise, wary, *arch*!
Who oft had gossiped long in the church porch."

The word "*arch*" is here interpolated to give some colour to the charge of "*gossiping*," absurdly asserted of the learned Sergeant. The *Parvis* was the place of conference, where suitors met with their counsel and legal advisers; and Chaucer merely intimates thereby the extent of the Sergeant's practice. In Chaucer we have—

"In termès hadde he cas and domès alle
That fro the time of *King Will*. weren *faite*."

Who does not see the propriety of the customary contraction, *King Will*? Mr. Horne does not; and substitutes, "since King William's reign."

Of the *Frankleyn* Chaucer says, he was

"An householder, and that a *grote* was he;"

the context plainly showing the meaning to be, "hospitable on a great scale." Mr. Horne ignorantly translates the words,

"A householder of great extent was he."

In Chaucer we have—

"His table dormant in his *belle* alway
Stood ready covered all the *longe* day."

The meaning of that is, that any person, or party, might

sit down, at any hour of the day, and help himself to something comfortable, as indeed is the case now in all country houses worth visiting—such as Buchanan Lodge. Mr. Horne stupidly exaggerates thus—

“His table with repletion heavy lay
Amidst his hall throughout the feasting day.”

In the prologue to the Reve's Tale, the Reve, nettled by the miller, who had been satirical on his trade, says he will

“*somdel set his howve*
Forleful is with force force off to showve.”

“Howve” is cap—and in the Miller's Prologue we had been told

“How that a clerk had set the wright's cappe;”
that is, “made a fool” of him—nay, a cuckold. Mr. Horne,
“Though my reply *should somewhat fret his nose.*”

In Chaucer the Reve's tale begins with,

“At Trumpington, not far from Cantebrigge,
There goeth a brook, and over that a brigge.”

Mr. Horne saith somewhat wilfully,

“At Trumpington, near Cambridge, *if you look,*
There goeth a bridge, and under that a brook.”

Two Cantabs ask leave of their Warden

“To geve hem leve *but a kitel stound,*
To gon to mill and sen hire corn yground;”

i. e., “to give them leave for a short time.” Mr. Horne translates it “for a merry round.”

In the course of the tale, the miller's wife

“Came leaping inward at a renne;”

i. e., “Came leaping into the room at a run.” Mr. Horne translates it—

“The miller's wife came *laughing inwardly.*”

Chaucer says—

“This miller has so *wisly* bibbed ale.”

And Mr. Horne, with incredible ignorance of the meaning of that word, says—

“The miller hath so *wisely* bobbed of ale.”

So wisely that he was "for-drunken"—and "as a horse he snorteth in his sleep."

In Chaucer the description of the miller's daughter ends with this line—

"But right faire was hire here, I will not lie,"

i. e. her hair. Mr. Horne translates it "was *she* here."

But there is no end to such blunders.

In Chaucer, as in all our old poets of every degree, there occur, over and over again, such forms of natural expression as the following,—and when they do occur, let us have them; but what a feeble modernizer must he be who keeps adding to the number till he gives his readers the ear-ache. Not one of the following is in the original:—

"At Algeziras, in Granada, he."

"At many a noble fight of ships was he."

"For certainly a prelate fair was he."

"In songs and tales the prize o'er all bore he."

"And a poor parson of a town was he."

"Such had he often proved, and loath was he."

"In youth a good trade practised well had he."

"Lordship and servitude at once hath he."

"And die he must, as echo did, said he."

"Madam, this is impossible, said he."

"Save wretched Aurelius, none was sad but he."

"And said thus when this last request heard he."

In like manner, in Chaucer as in all our old poets of every degree, there occur over and over again such natural forms of expression as "I wot," "I wis,"—and where they do occur let us have them too and be thankful; but poverty-stricken in the article of rhymes must *be he*, who is perpetually driven to resort to such expedients as the following—all of which are Mr. Horne's own;

"Of fees and robes he many had, I ween."

"And yet this manacle made them fools, I wot."

"This Reve upon a stallion sat, I wot."

"Than the poor parson in two months, I wot."

"For certainly when I was born, I trow."

"A small stalk in mine eyes he sees, I deem."

"There were two scholars young and poor, I trow."

"John lieth still and not far off, I trow."

"Eastern astrologers and clerks, I wis."

"This woful heart found some reprieve, I wis."

"Unto his brother's bed he came, I wis."

"And now Aurelius ever, as I ween."

"That she could not sustain herself, I ween."

Mr. Horne, in his Introduction, unconscious of his own sins,

speaks with due contempt of the modernizations of Chaucer by Ogle and Lipscomb and their coadjutors, and of the injury they may have done to the reputation of the old poet. But whatever injury they may have occasioned, "there can be no doubt," he says, "of the mischief done by Mr. Pope's obscene specimen, placed at the head of his list of 'Imitations of English Poets.' It is an imitation of those passages which we should only regard as the rank offal of a great feast in the olden time. The better taste and feeling of Pope should have imitated the noble poetry of Chaucer. He avoided this 'for sundry weighty reasons.' But if this so-called imitation by Pope was 'done in his youth' he should have burnt it in his age. Its publication at the present day among his elegant works, is a disgrace to modern times, and to his high reputation." Not so fast and strong, good Mister Horne. The six-and-twenty octosyllabic lines thus magisterially denounced by our stern moralist in the middle of the nineteenth century, have had a place in Pope's works for a hundred years; and it is too late now to seek to delete them. They were written by Pope in his fourteenth or fifteenth year, and gross as they are, are pardonable in a boy of precocious genius, giving way for a laughing hour to his sense of the grotesque. Joe Warton (not Tom) pompously calls them "a gross and dull caricature of the Father of English Poetry." And Mr. Bowles says, "he might have added, it is disgusting as it is dull, and no more like Chaucer than a *Billingsgate* is like an *Oberea*." It is *not* dull, but exceedingly clever; and Father Geoffrey himself would have laughed at it—patted Pope on the head—and enjoined him for the future to be more discreet. Roscoe, like a wise man, regards it without horror—marking of it, and the boyish imitation of Spenser, that "why these sportive and characteristic sketches should be brought to so severe an ordeal, and pointed out to the reprehension of the reader as gross and disagreeable, dull and disgusting, it is not easy to perceive." Old Joe maunders when he says, "he that was unacquainted with Spenser, and was to form his ideas of the turn and manner of his genius from this piece, would undoubtedly suppose that he abounded in filthy images, and excelled in describing the lower scenes of life." Let all such blockheads suppose what they choose. Pope—says Roscoe—"was well aware as any one of the superlative beauties and merits of Spenser, whose works he assiduously studied, both in his early and riper years; but it

was not his intention in these few lines to give a *serious* imitation of him. All that he attempted was to show how exactly he could apply the language and manner of Spenser to low and burlesque subjects; and in this he has completely succeeded. To compare these lines, as Dr. Warton has done, with those more extensive and highly-finished productions, the *Castle of Indolence*, by Thompson, and the *Minstrel* by Beattie, is manifestly unjust—and stupidly absurd. What Mr. Horne means by saying that Pope “avoided imitating the noble poetry of Chaucer for sundry weighty reasons,” is not apparent at first sight. It means, however, that Pope *could* not have done so—that the feat was beyond his power. The author of the *Messiah* and the *Eloise* wrote tolerable poetry of his own; and he knew how to appreciate, and to emulate, too, some of the finest of Chaucer’s. Why did Mr. Horne not mention his *Temple of Fame*? A more childish sentence never was written than “its publication at the present day among his elegant works is a disgrace to modern times, and to his high reputation.” Pope’s reputation is above reproach, enshrined in honour for evermore, and modern times are not so Miss Mollyish as to sympathize with such sensitive censorship of an ingeniously versified peccadillo, at which our *avi* and *proavi* could not choose but smile.

But Mr. Horne, thinking that in this case “the child is father of the man,” rates Pope as roundly for what he seems to suppose were the misdemeanours of his manhood. “Of the highly-finished paraphrase, by Mr. Pope, of the ‘Wife of Bath’s Prologue,’ and ‘The Merchant’s Tale,’ suffice it to say, that the licentious humour of the original being divested of *its quaintness and obscurity* (!) becomes yet more licentious in proportion to the fine touches of skill with which it is brought into the light. Spontaneous coarseness is made revolting by meretricious artifice. Instead of keeping in the distance that which was objectionable, by such shades in the modernizing as should have answered to the *hazy appearance* (!) of the original, it receives a clear outline, and is brought close to us. An ancient Briton, with his long rough hair and painted body, laughing and singing half-naked under a tree, may be coarse, yet innocent of all intention to offend; but if the imagination (absorbing the anachronism) can conceive him shorn of his falling hair, his paint washed off, and in this uncovered state introduced into a drawing-room full of

ladies in rouge and diamonds, hoops and hair-powder, no one can doubt the injury thus done to the ancient Briton. This is no unfair illustration of what was done in the time of Pope," &c.

It may be "no unfair illustration," and certainly is no unludicrous one. We must all of us allow, that were an ancient Briton, habited, or rather unhabited, as above, to bounce into a modern drawing-room full of ladies, whether in rouge and diamonds, hoops and hair-powder, or not, the effect of such *entrée* would be prodigious on the fair and fluttered Volscians. Our imagination, "absorbing the anachronism," ensconces us professionally behind a sofa, to witness and to record the scene. How different in nature Christopher North and R. H. Horne! While he would be commiserating "the injury thus done to the ancient Briton," we should be imploring our savage ancestor to spare the ladies. "Innocent of all intention to offend" might be Caractacus, but to the terrified bevy he would seem the king of the Cannibal Islands at least. What protection against the assault of a savage, almost *in puris naturalibus*, could be hoped for in their hoops! Yet who knows but that, on looking round and about, he might himself be frightened out of his senses? An ancient Briton, with his long rough hair and painted body, may laugh and sing by himself, half-naked under a tree, and in his own conceit be a match for any amount of women. But shorn of his falling hair, and without a streak of paint on his cheeks, verily his heart might be found to die within him, before furies with faces fiery with rouge, and heads horrent with pomatum—till instinctively he strove to roll himself up in the Persian carpet, and there prayed for deliverance to his tutelary gods.

Our imagination having thus "absorbed the anachronism," let us now leave Caractacus in the carpet—while our reason has recourse to the philosophy of criticism. Mr. Horne asserts, that in "Mr. Pope's" highly-finished paraphrase of the "Wife of Bath's Prologue," and the "Merchant's Tale," "the licentious humour of the original is divested of its quaintness and obscurity, and becomes yet more licentious in proportion to the fine touches of skill with which it is brought into the light." Quaintness and *obscurity*!! Why, everything in those tales is as plain as a pike-staff, and clearer than mud. "The hazy appearance of the original," indeed!

What! of the couple in the Pear Tree? Mr. Horne spitefully and perversely misrepresents the character of Pope's translations. They are remarkably free from the vice he charges them withal—and have been admitted to be so by the most captious critics. Many of the very strong things in Chaucer, which you may call coarse and gross if you will, are omitted by Pope, and many softened down: nor is there a single line in which the spirit is not the spirit of satire. The folly of senile dotage is throughout exposed as unsparingly, though with a difference in the imitation, as in the original. Even Joseph Warton and Bowles, affectedly fastidious over-much as both too often are, and culpably prompt to find fault, acknowledge that Pope's versions are blameless. "In the art of telling a story," says Bowles, "Pope is peculiarly happy; we almost forget the grossness of the subject of this tale, (the Merchant's,) while we are struck by the uncommon ease and readiness of the verse, the suitableness of the expression, and the spirit and happiness of the whole." While Dr. Warton, sensibly remarking, "that the character of a fond old dotard, betrayed into disgrace by an unsuitable match, is supported in a lively manner," refrains from making himself ridiculous by mealy-mouthed moralities which on such a subject every person of sense and honesty must despise, Mr. Horne keeps foolishly carping at Pope, or "Mr. Pope," as he sometimes calls him, throughout his interminable—no, not interminable—his hundred-paged Introduction. He abominates Pope's Homer, and groans to think how it has corrupted the English ear by its long domination in our schools. He takes up, with leathern lungs, the howl of the Lakers, and his imitative bray is louder than the original, "in linked sweetness long drawn out." Such sonorous strictures are innocent; but his false charge of licentiousness against Pope is most reprehensible—and it is insincere. For he has the sense to see Chaucer's broadest satire in its true light, and its fearless expositions. Yet from his justification of pictures and all their colouring in the ancient poet, that might well startle people by no means timid, he turns with frowning forehead and reproving hand to corresponding delineations in the modern, that stand less in need of it, and spits his spite on Pope, which we wipe off that it may not corrode. "This translation was done at sixteen or seventeen," says Pope in a note to his January and May—and *there is not*, among the achievements of early genius, to be

found another such specimen of finished art and of perfect mastery.

Mr. Horne has ventured to give in his volume the *Reve's Tale*. "It has been thought," he says, "that an idea of the extraordinary versatility of Chaucer's genius could not be adequately conveyed, unless one of his matter-of-fact comic tales were attempted. The *Reve's* has accordingly been selected, as presenting a graphic painting of character, equal to those contained in the 'Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,' displayed in action by means of a story, which may be designated as *a broad farce, ending in a pantomime of absurd reality*. To those who are acquainted with the original, an apology may not be considered inadmissible for certain necessary variations and omissions." For our own part, we do not object to this tale, though at the commencement of such a work its insertion was ill-judged, and will endanger greatly the volume. But we do object to the hypocritical cant about the licentiousness of Pope's fine touches, from the person who wrote the above words in italics. Omissions there must have been—but they sadly shear the tale of its vigour, and indeed leave it not very intelligible to readers who know not the original. The variations are most unhappy—miserable, indeed; and by putting the miller's daughter to lie in a closet at the end of a passage, this moral modernizer has killed Chaucer. In the matchless original all the night's action goes on in one room—and that not a large one—miller, miller's wife, miller's daughter, and the two strenuous Cantabs, are within the same four narrow walls—their beds nearly touch—the jeopardized cradle has just space to rock in—yet this self-elected expositor of Chaucer is either so blind as not to see how essential such allocation of the parties is to the wicked comedy, or such a blunderer as to believe that he can improve on the greatest master that ever dared, and with perfect success, to picture, without our condemnation—so wide is the privilege of genius in sportive fancy—what, but for the self-rectifying spirit of fiction, would have been an outrage on nature, and in the number not only of forbidden but unhallowed things. The passages interpolated by Mr. Horne's own pen are as bad as possible—clownish and anti-Chaucerian to the last degree.

For example, he thus takes upon himself, in the teeth of Chaucer, to narrate Alein's night adventure.

"And up he rose, and crept along the floor;
 Into the passage humming with their snore;
 As narrow was it as a drum or tub,
 And like a beetle doth he grope and *grab*,
 Feeling his way, *with darkness in his hands*,
 Till at the passage end he stooping stands."

Chaucer tells us, without circumlocution, why the Miller's Wife for a while had left her husband's side; but Mr. Horne is intolerant of the indelicate, and thus elegantly paraphrases the one original word—

"The wife her routing ceased soon after that:
 And woke and left her bed; *for she was pained*
With nightmare dreams of skies that madly rained.
Eastern astrologers and clerks, I wis,
In time of Apis tell of storms like this."

Such is modern refinement!

In Chaucer, the blind encounter between the Miller and one of the Cantabs, who, mistaking him for his comrade, had whispered into his ear what had happened during the night to his daughter, is thus comically described—

"Ye false barlot, quod the miller, hast?
 A false traitour, false clerk, (quod he,)
 Thou shalt be ded by Goddès dignitee,
 Who dorstè be so bold to disparage
 My daughter, that is come of swiche lineage.
 And by the throte-bolle he caught Alein,
 And he him hente despiteously again,
 And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
 Down ran the bloody streme upon his brest;
 And on the flore with nose and mouth to-broke,
 They walwe, as don two piggès in a poke.
 And up they gon, and down again anon,
 Till that the miller spurned at a stone,
 And down he fell backward upon his wif,
 That wistè nothing of this nice strif,
 For she was falle astepe, a litel wight
 With John the clerk," and

Here comes Mr. Horne in his strength.

"Thou slanderous ribald! quoth the miller, hast?
 A traitor false, false lying clerk, quoth he,
 Thou shalt be slain by heaven's dignity
 Who rudely dar'st disparage with foul lie
 My daughter, that is come of lineage high!
 And by the throat he Allan grasp'd amain,
 And caught him, yet more furiously again,

And on his nose he smote him with his fist !
 Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast,
 And on the floor they tumble heel and crown,
 And shake the house, it seem'd all coming down.
 And up they rise, and down again they roll :
 Till that the Miller, stumbling o'er a coal,
 Went plunging headlong like a bull at bait,
 And met his wife, and both fell flat as slate."

Mr. Horne cannot read Chaucer. The Miller does not, as he makes him do, accuse the Cantab of falsely slandering his daughter's virtue. He does not doubt the truth of the unluckily blabbed secret ; false harlot, false traitor, false clerk, are all words that tell his belief ; but Mr. Horne, not understanding "disparage," as it is here used by Chaucer, wholly mistakes the cause of the father's fury. He does not even know, that it is the Miller who gets the bloody nose, not the Cantab. "As don two piggès in a poke," he leaves out, preferring, as more picturesque, "And on the floor they tumble *heel and crown!*" "And shake the house—it seemed all coming down," is not in Chaucer, nor could be ; but the crowning stupidity is that of making the Miller meet his wife, and upset her—she being all the while in bed, and now startled out of sleep by the weight of her fallen superincumbent husband. And this is modernizing Chaucer ?

What, then—after all we have written about him—we ask, can, at this day, be done with Chaucer ? The true answer is—**—READ HIM.** The late Laureate dared to think that every one might ; and in his collection, or selection, of English poets down to Habington inclusive, he has given the prologue, and half a dozen of the finest and most finished tales ; believing that every earnest lover of English poetry would by degrees acquire courage and strength to devour and digest a moderately-spread banquet. Without doubt, Southey did well. It was a challenge to poetical Young England to gird up his loins and fall to his work. If you will have the fruit, said the Laureate, you must climb the tree. He bowed some heavily laden branches down to your eye, to tempt you ; but climb you must, if you will eat. He displayed a generous trust in the growing desire and capacity of the country for her own time-shrouded poetical treasures. In the same full volume, he gave the "*Faerie Queene*" from the first word to the last.

Let us hope boldly, as Southey hoped. But there are, in the present world, a host of excellent, sensitive readers, whose

natural taste is perfectly susceptible of Chaucer, if he spoke their language; yet who have not the courage, or the leisure, or the aptitude, to master his. They must not be too hastily blamed if they do not readily reconcile themselves to a garb of thought which disturbs and distracts all their habitual associations. Consider, the "ingenious feeling," the vital sensibility, with which they apprehend their own English, may place the insurmountable barrier which opposes their access to the father of our poetry. What can be done for them?

In the first place, what is it that so much removes the language from us? It is removed by the words and grammatical forms that we have lost—by its real antiquity; perhaps more by an accidental semblance of antiquity—the orthography. That last may seem a small matter; but it is not.

There are three ways in which literary craftsmen have attempted to fill up, or bridge over, the gulf of time, and bring the poet of Edward III and Richard II near to modern readers.

Dryden and Pope are the representatives, as they are the masters, of the first method; for the others who have trodden in their footsteps are hardly to be named or thought of. Dryden and Pope hold, in their own school of modernizing, this undoubted distinction, that under their treatment, that which was poetry remains poetry. Their followers have written, for the most part, intelligible English, but never poetry. They have told the story, and not that always; but they have distilled lethargy on the tongue of the narrator.—This first method the most boldly departs from the type. It was probably the only way that the culture of Dryden's and Pope's time admitted of. We have since gradually returned, more and more, upon our own antiquity, as all the nations of Europe have upon theirs. Then civilization seemed to herself to escape forwards out of barbarism. Now she finds herself safe; and she ventures to seek light for her mature years in the recollections of her own childhood.

But now, the altered spirit of the age has produced a new manner of modernization. The problem has been put thus. To retain of Chaucer whatever in him is our language, or is most nearly our language—only making good, always, the measure; and for expression, which time has left out of our speech, to substitute such as is in use. And several followers

of the muses, as we have seen, have lately tried their hand at this kind of conversion.

It is hard to judge both the system and the specimens. For if the specimens be thought to have succeeded, the system may, upon them, be favourably judged; but if the specimens have failed, the system must not upon them be unfavourably judged, but must in candour be looked upon as possibly carrying in itself means and powers that have not yet been unfolded. But unhappily a difficulty occurs which would not have occurred with a writer in prose—the law of the verse is imperious. Ten syllables must be kept, and rhyme must be kept; and in the experiment it results, generally, that whilst the rehabiting of Chaucer is undertaken under a necessity which lies wholly in the obscurity of his dialect—the proposed ground or motive of modernization—far the greater part of the actual changes are made for the sake of that which beforehand you might not think of, namely, the Verse. This it is that puts the translators to the strangest shifts and fetches, and besets the version, in spite of their best skill, with anti-Chaucerisms as thick as blackberries.

It might, at first sight, seem as if there could be no remorse about dispersing the atmosphere of antiquity; and you might be disposed to say—a thought is a thought, a feeling a feeling, a fancy a fancy. Utter the thought, the feeling, the fancy, with what words you will, provided that they are native to the matter, and the matter will hold its own worth. No. There is more in poetry than the definite, separable matter of a fancy, a feeling, a thought. There is the indefinite, inseparable spirit, out of which they all arise, which verifies them all, harmonizes them all, interprets them all. There is the spirit of the poet himself. But the spirit of the time in which a poet lives, flows through the spirit of the poet. Therefore, a poet cannot be taken out of his own time, and rightly and wholly understood. It seems to follow that thought, feeling, fancy, which he has expressed, cannot be taken out of his own speech, and his own style, and rightly and wholly understood. Let us bring this home to Chaucer, and our occasion. The air of antiquity hangs about him, cleaves to him; therefore he is the venerable Chaucer. One word, beyond any other, expresses to us the difference betwixt his age and ours—Simplicity. To read him after his own spirit, we must be made simple. That temper is called up in us by the simplicity of his speech and style. Touched by these,

and under their power, we lose our false habituations, and return to nature. But for this singular power exerted over us, this dominion of an irresistible sympathy, the hint of antiquity which lies in the language seems requisite. That summons us to put off our own, and put on another mind. In a half modernization, there lies the danger that we shall hang suspended between two minds—between two ages—taken out of one, and not effectually transported into that other. Might a poet, if it were worth while, who had imbued himself with antiquity and with Chaucer, depart more freely from him, and yet more effectually reproduce him? Imitating, not erasing, the colours of the old time—untying the strict chain that binds you to the fourteenth century, but impressing on you candour, clearness, shrewdness, ingenuous susceptibility, simplicity, *ANTIQUITY!* A creative translator or imitator—Chaucer born again, a century and a half later.

Let us see how Wordsworth deals with Chaucer in the first seven stanzas of the Cuckoo and Nightingale.

“The god of love, a benedicite!
How mighty and how gret a lord is he,
For he can make of lowè hertès highe,
Of highè lowe, and likè for to dyc,
And hardè hertès he can maken fre.

“And he can make, within a litel stounde,
Of sekè folkè, holè, freshe, and sounde,
Of holè folkè he can maken seke
And he can binden and unbinden eke,
That he wol have ybounden or unbounde.

“To telle his might my wit may not suffice,
For he can make of wise folke ful nice,
For he may don al that he wol devise,
And lither folkè to destroyen vice,
And proude hertès he can make agrise.

“And shortly al that ever he wol he may,
Ayenès him dare no wight sayè nay:
For he can glade and grevè whom he liketh:
And whoso that he wol, he lougheth or siketh,
And most his might he shedeth ever in May.

“For every trueè gentle hertè fre
That with him is or thinketh for to be
Ayenès May shal have now som stering,
Other to joie or elles to som mourning;
In no seson so moch as thinketh me.

"For whan they maye here the briddes singe,
And se the flourès and the levès springe,
That bringeth into hire remembraunce
A maner esè, medled with grevaunce,
And lusty thoughtès fulle of gret longinge.

"And of that longinge cometh hevinesse,
And therof groweth oft gret sekenesse,
Al for lackinge of that that they desire;
And thus in May ben hertès sette on fire,
So that they brennen forth in gret distresse."

WORDSWORTH.

"The God of love! Ah, benedicite,
How mighty and how great a-lord is he,
For he of low hearts can make high, of high
He can make low, and unto death bring nigh,
And hard hearts he can make them kind and free.

"Within a little time, as hath been found,
He can make sick folk whole, and fresh, and sound.
Them who are whole in body and in mind
He can make sick, bind can he and unbind
All that he will have bound, or have unbound.

"To tell his might my wit may not suffice,
Foolish men he can make them out of wise;
For he may do all that he will devise,
Loose livers he can make abate their vice,
And proud hearts can make tremble in a trice.

"In brief, the whole of what he will, he may;
Against him dare not any wight say nay;
To humble or afflict whome'er he will,
To gladden or to grieve, he hath like skill;
But most his might he sheds on the eve of May.

"For every true heart, gentle heart and free,
That with him is, or thinketh so to be,
Now against May shall have some stirring—whether
To joy, or be it to some mourning; never
At other time, methinks, in like degree.

"For now when they may hear the small birds' song,
And see the budding leaves the branches throng,
This unto their remembrance doth bring
All kinds of pleasure, mix'd with sorrowing,
And longing of sweet thoughts that ever long.

"And of that longing heaviness doth come,
Whence oft great sickness grows of heart and home;

Sick are they all for lack of their desire;
And thus in May their hearts are set on fire,
So that they burn forth in great martyrdom."

Here is the master of the art; and his work, most of all, therefore, makes us doubt the practicability of the thing undertaken. He works reverently, lovingly, surely with full apprehension of Chaucer; and yet, at every word where he leaves Chaucer, the spirit of Chaucer leaves the verse. You see plainly that his rule is to change the least that can possibly be changed. Yet the gentle grace, the lingering musical sweetness, the taking simplicity, of the wise old poet, vanish—brushed away like the down from the butterfly's wing by the lightest and most timorous touch.

"For he can make of lowè hertès highe."

There is the soul of the lover's poet, of the poet himself a lover, poured out and along in one fond verse, gratefully consecrated to the mystery of love, which he, too, has experienced when he—the shy, the fearful, the reserved—was yet by the touch of that all-powerful ray which

"Shoots invisible virtue even to the deep,"

enkindled, and to his own surprise made elate to hope and to dare.

But now contract, as Wordsworth does, the dedicated verse into a half verse, and bring together the two distinct and opposite mysteries under one enunciation—in short, divide the one verse to two subjects—

"For he of low hearts can make high—of high
He can make low;"

and the fact vouched remains the same, the simplicity of the words is kept, for they are the very words, and yet something is gone—and in that something everything! There is no longer the dwelling upon the words, no longer the dilated utterance of a heart that melts with its own thoughts, no longer the consecration of the verse to its matter, no longer the softness, the light, the fragrance, the charm—no longer, in a word, the old manner. Here is, in short, the philosophical observation touching love, "the saw of might" still; but the love itself here is not. A kindly and moved observer speaks, not a lover.

In one of the above-cited stanzas, Urry seems to have mislaid Wordsworth. Stanza iv. verse 4, Chaucer says:—

“And whoso that he wol, he lougheth or siketh.”

The sense undoubtedly is, “and whosoever *he*”—namely, the God of Love—“will, *he*” namely, the Lover—“laugheth or sigheth accordingly.” But Urry, mistaking the construction—supposed that *he*, in both places, meant the god only. He had, therefore, to find out in “lougheth” and “siketh,” actions predicable of the love-god. The verse accordingly runs thus with him,

“And who that he wol, he loweth or siketh.”

Now, it is true, that, after all, we do not exactly know how Urry understood his own reading; for he did not make his own glossary. But from his glossary, we find that “to love” is to praise, to allow, to approve—furthermore that “siketh” in this place means “maketh sick.” Wordsworth, following as it would appear the lection of Urry, but only half-agreeing to the interpretation of Urry’s glossarist, has rendered the line

“To humble or afflict whome’er he will.”

He has understood in his own way, from an obvious suggestion, “loweth,” to mean, maketh low, humbleth; whilst “afflict” is a ready turn for “maketh sick” of the glossary. But here Wordsworth cannot be in the right. For Chaucer is now busied with magnifying the kingdom of love by accumulated antitheses—high, low—sick, whole—wise, foolish—the wicked turns good, the proud shrink and fear—the God, at his pleasure, gladdens or grieves. The phrase under question must conform to the manner of the place where it appears. An opposition of meanings is indispensable. “Humble or afflict,” which are both on one side, cannot be right. “Approveth or maketh sick,” are on opposite sides, but will hardly pick one another out for antagonists. “Laugheth or sigheth,” has the vividness and simplicity of Chaucer, the most exact contrariety matches them—and the two phenomena cannot be left out of a lover’s enumeration.

Chaucer says of his “bosom’s lord,”

“And most his might he shedeth ever in May;”

renowning here, as we saw that he does elsewhere, the whole month, as love’s own segment of the zodiacal circle. The

time of the poem itself is accordingly "the thriddle night of May." Wordsworth has rendered,

"But most his might he sheds on the eve of May."

Why so? Is the approaching visitation of the power more strongly felt than the power itself in presence? Chaucer says distinctly the contrary, and why with a word lose, or obscure, or hazard the appropriation of the month entire, so conspicuous a tenet in the old poetical mind? And is Eve here taken strictly—the night before May-day, like the *Pervigilium Veneris*? Or loosely, on the verge of May, answerably to "ayenès May" afterwards? To the former sense, we might be inclined to propose on the contrary part,

"But sheds his might most on the morrow of May,"

i. e., in prose, on May-day morning, consonantly to all the testimonies.

Chaucer says that the coming-on of the love-month produces in the heart of the lover

"A maner easè medled with grevaunce."

That is to say, a kind of joy or pleasure (Fr. *aïse*), mixed with sadness. He insists, by this expression, upon the strangeness of the kind, peculiar to the willing sufferers under this unique passion, "love's pleasing smart." Did Wordsworth, by intention or misapprehension, leave out this turn of expression, by which, in an age less forward than ours in sentimental researches, Chaucer drew notice to the contradictory nature of the internal state which he described? As if Chaucer had said, "*al* maner ese," Wordsworth says, "all kinds of pleasure mixed with sorrowing."

In the next line he adds to the intuitions of his master, one of his own profound intuitions, if we construe aright—

"And longing of sweet thoughts that ever long."

That ever long! The sweetest of thoughts are never satisfied with their own deliciousness. Earthly delight, or heavenly delight upon earth, penetrating the soul, stirs in it the perception of its native illimitable capacity for delight. Bliss, which should wholly possess the blest being, plays traitor to itself, turns into a sort of divine dissatisfaction, and brings forth from its teeming and infinite bosom a brood of winged wishes, bright with hues which memory has bestowed, and restless with innate aspirations. Such is our commentary on

the truly Wordsworthian line, but it is not a line answerable to Chaucer's—

“And lusty thoughtès full of grete longinge.”

Is this hypercriticism? It is the only criticism that can be tolerated betwixt two such rivals as Chaucer and Wordsworth. The scales that weigh poetry should turn with a grain of dust, with the weight of a sunbeam, for they weigh spirit. Or is it saying that Wordsworth has not done his work as well as it was possible to be done? Rather it is inferring, from the failure of the work in his hand, that he and his colleagues have attempted that which was impossible to be done. We will not here hunt down line by line. We put before the reader the means of comparing verse with verse. We have, with “a thoughtful heart of love,” made the comparison, and feel throughout that the modern will not, cannot, do justice to the old English. The quick sensibility which thrills through the antique strain deserts the most cautious version of it. In short, we fall back upon the old conviction, that verse is a sacred, and song an inspired thing; that the feeling, the thought, the word, and the musical breath spring together out of the soul in one creation; that a translation is a thing not given in *rerum natura*; consequently, that there is nothing else to be done with a great poet saving to leave him in his glory.

And our friend John Dryden? Oh, he is safe enough; for the new translators all agree that his are no translations at all of Chaucer, but original and excellent poems of his own.

A language that is half Chaucer's, and half that of his renderer, is in great danger to be the language of nobody. But Chaucer's has its own energy and vivacity which attaches you, and as soon as you have undergone the due transformation by sympathy, carries you effectually with it. In the moderate versions that are best done, you miss this indispensable force of attraction. But Dryden boldly and freely gives you himself, and along you sweep, or are swept rejoicingly along. “The grand charge to which his translations are amenable,” says Mr. Horne, “is, that he acted upon an erroneous principle.” Be it so. Nevertheless, they are among the glories of our political literature. Mr. Horne's, literal as he supposes them to be, are unreadable. He, too, acts on an erroneous principle; and his execution betrays throughout the unskilful hand of a presumptuous

apprentice. But he has "every respect for the genius, and for everything that belongs to the memory, of Dryden;" and thus magniloquently eulogizes this most splendid achievement:—"The fact is, Dryden's version of the 'Knight's Tale,' would be most appropriately read by the towering shade of one of Virgil's heroes, walking up and down a battlement, and waving a long, gleaming spear, to the roll and sweep of his sonorous numbers."

MAC-FLECNOE AND THE DUNCIAD.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

THE field which we have invaded is one obviously of a vast comprehension. Taking it up, as we have rightly done, from Dryden, more than a century and a half of our literature lies immediately and necessarily within it. For the fountain of criticism once opened and flowing, the criticism of a country continually reflects its literature, as a river the banks of which yield it a channel, and through which it winds.

But the image falls short of the thing signified; for criticism is retrospective without limit, as well as cotermporaneous. Heaven only knows whether it may not be endowed with a gift of prophecy; and for its horizon—is this narrower than the world? We have undertaken a field which seems limited, only because it stretches beyond sight. Let us hope, however, that we shall find some art of striking our own road through it, without being obliged to study, both in the reflection and in the original, all the books of all nations and ages, criticising as we go along, both originals and criticisms. Every subject, said Burke—we remember his remark, though not the very words—branches out into infinitude. The point of view draws a horizon—the goal determines a track. “The British Critics” themselves are a host,

“Innumerable as the stars of night,
Or stars of morning; dewdrops which the sun
Impearls on every leaf and every flower.”

But discreet, conscientious Oblivion has infolded under his loving pinions nine hundred and ninety-nine in every thousand; while we think of concerning ourselves with those only whose names occupy some notable niche, pedestal, or other position, in the august house of the great goddess Fame. We desire to show the spirit and power of British criticism, to display the characteristic working of the British intellect

in this department of intellectual activity. Therefore, among known names, we shall dwell the most upon those writers whose works the mind of the nation has the most frankly, cordially, and unreservedly taken to itself, recognizing them, as it were, for its own productions—those writers whose reputation the country has the most distinctly identified with her own renown.

We have taken hold upon two such names, Dryden and Pope. And tens of thousands have experienced with us the pleasures that arise from a renewed or new intimacy with powerful spirits. The acquaintance is not speedily exhausted. It grows and unfolds itself. When you think to have done with them, and lift up your bonnet with a courteous gesture of leave-taking, your host draws your arm within his, and leads you out into his garden, and threading some labyrinthine involution of paths, conducts you to some hidden parterre of his choicest flowers, or to the aerial watch-tower of his most magnificent prospect.

The omnipotent setter of limits, Death, freezes the tuneful tongue, unnerves the critical hand, from which the terrible pen drops into dust. Shakspeare has written his last play—Dryden his last tale. You may dream—if you like—of what projected and unwritten—what unprojected but possible comedies, histories, tragedies, went into the tomb in the church of Stratford upon Avon! In the meanwhile you will find that what is written is not so soon read. Read for the first time it soon is—not for the last. For what is “to read?” “*Legere*” is “to gather.” Shakspeare is not soon gathered—nor is Dryden.

Walk through a splendid region. Do you think that you have seen it? You have begun seeing it. Live in it fifty years, and by degrees you may have come to know something worth telling of Windermere! Our vocation now, gentles all, is not simply the knowing—it is the showing too; and here, too, the same remark holds good. For we think ten times and more, that now surely we have shown poet or critic. But not so. Some other attitude, some other phasis presents itself; and all at once you feel that, without it, your exposition of the power, or your picture of the man, is incomplete. You have seen how the critics lead us a dance. Dryden and Pope criticise Shakspeare. We have been obliged to criticise Shakspeare, and this criticism of him. Dryden *measures himself* with Juvenal, Lucretius, and Virgil. We

somewhat violently perhaps—with a gentle violence—construe a translation into a criticism, and prate, too, of those immortals. Glorious John modernizes Father Geoffrey; and to try what capacity of palate you have for the enjoyment of English poetry some four or five centuries old, we spread our board with a feast of veritable Chaucer. Yet not a word, all the while, of the *Wife of Bath's Tale of Chivalry and Faëry*, which is given with fine spirit by Dryden—nor of the *Cock and the Fox*, told by the Nun's priest, which is renewed with infinite life and gayety, and sometimes we are half inclined to say, with fidelity in the departure, by the same matchless pen. Good old father Chaucer! Can it be true that century rolling after century thickens the dust upon Adam Scrivener's vellum! Can it be true that proceeding time widens the gulf yawning betwixt thee and ourselves, thy compatriots of another day, thy poetical posterity! The supposition is unnatural—un-English—un-Scottish. Thou hast been the one popular poet of England. Shakspeare alone has unseated thee. Thou hast been taken to the heart of Scottish poets, as though there were not even a dialectical shadow of difference distinguishing thine and their languages. A dim time, an eclipsing of light and warmth fell upon the island, and to read thee was a feat of strange scholarship, a study of the more learned. But happier years shall succeed. As Antæus the giant acquired life and strength by dropping back upon the bosom of his mother earth—she, the universal parent, was, you know, in a more private and domestic meaning, his mother—so, giants of our brood, dropping back upon thy bosom, O Father Chaucer! shall from that infusive touch renew vitality and vigour, and go forth exultingly to scale, not Olympus, but Parnassus. And now, in illustration of the ruling spirit—known and felt in its full power only by ourselves—of this series—NORTH'S SPECIMENS OF THE BRITISH CRITICS—we invite unexpectedly—(for who can foresee the ensuing segment of our orbit?)—the people of these realms to admire with us the critical genius of Dryden and of Pope, displayed in their matchless satires—MAC-FLECKNOE and the DUNCIAD.

In regard to these poems, shall we seek to conciliate our countrymen by admitting, at the outset, that there is something in both to be confessed and forgiven? That there is something about them that places them upon a peculiar footing—that is not quite right? They must be distinguished from the legitimate poems, in which the poet and the servant

of the Muses merely exercises his ministry. He then furnishes to the needs of humanity, and is the acknowledged benefactor of his kind. But these are *wilful* productions. They are from the *personal* self of the poet. They are arbitrary acts of mighty despots. They kill, because they choose and can. And we, alas!—we are bribed by the idolatry of power to justify the excesses of power. Let not our maligners—our foes—hear of it, for it is one of our vulnerable points.

Yet as long as men and women are weak and mortal, genius will possess a privilege of committing certain peccadilloes that will be winked at and hushed up. We proclaim poetry for an organ of the highest, profoundest truth. But every now and then, when we are in difficulties, we shroud the poet and ourselves under the undeniable fact, that poetry is fiction; and under that pretext, wildly and wickedly would throw off all responsibility from him and from ourselves, his retainers and abettors; and yet, something, after all, is to be conceded to the mask of the poet. All nations and times have agreed in not judging him by the prosaic laws to which we who write and speak prose are amenable. His is a playful part, and he has a knack of slipping from under the hand of serious judgment. He is a Proteus, and feels himself bound to speak the bare truth only when he is reduced to his proper person, not whilst he is exercising his preternatural powers of illusion. He holds in his grasp the rod of the Enchanter, Pleasure, and with a touch he unnerves the joints that would seize and drag him before the seat of an ordinary police. But we must remember that we are now scrawling unprivileged prose; and beware that we do not, like other officious and uncautious partizans, bring down upon our own defenceless heads the sword which the delinquency of them mightier far has roused from the scabbard.

Let us see, then, how stands the case of such satirists.

War enters into the kingdom of the Muses. Rival wits assail one another—Dryden and Shadwell. *Nec dis nec viribus equis*. This is a duel—*impar congressus Achillei*. But when Pope undertakes to hunt down the vermin of literature, this is no distraction of the Parnassian realm by civil war. This is the lawful magistrate going forth, armed perhaps with extraordinary powers, to clear an infested district of vulgar malefactors and notorious bad characters.

Vile publishers, vile critics, vile scribblers of every denomination, in prose and verse—all those who turn the press, that

organ of light for the world, into an engine of darkness—who may blame the poet for clothing them in such curses as shall make them for all time at once loathsome and laughable in Christian lands?

Letters! sent by heaven for accomplishing the gift of speech. The individual thinker, by turning his thoughts into words, advances himself in the art and power of thought—unravels, clears up, and establishes the movements of “the shadowy tribes of mind.” And so the federal republic of nations, by turning the spoken word into the written, advance their faculty of thinking, and their acquisition of thought. The thought has gained perpetuity when it is worded—the word has gained perpetuity when it is written. Reason waits her completed triumph from the written work, which converts, and alone can convert, the thought of the individual mind into that of the universal mind; thus constituting the fine act of one aspiring intelligence the common possession of the species, and collecting the produce of all wits into the public treasury of knowledge.

The misusers of letters are therefore the foes of the race. The licentious thinker and writer prejudices the liberty of thinking and writing. Those who excel in letters, and in the right use of letters, are sensitive to their misapplication. Hence arises a species of satire, or, if you will, satirist—THE SCRIBLERO-MASTIX. He must attack individuals. A heavily-resounding lash should scourge the immoral and the profane. Light stripes may suffice for quelling the less nocent dunces. In commonplace prose criticism, whatever form it may take, this can be done without supposed personal ill-will; for the Mastix is then only doing a duty plainly prescribed. The theologian must censure, and trample as mire, the railing assailant of the truths which in his eyes contain salvation. The reviewer must review. But what, it may be asked, moves any follower of the Muses to satirize a scribbler? He seems to go *out of his way* to do so; for verse has naturally better associations. But the personal aggression on the wit by the dunce, may fairly instigate the wit to flay the dunce. Now he finds the object of his satire *in the way*. The fact is, that Dryden’s poem and Pope’s were both moved in this way. They grew out of personal quarrels. Are they on that account to be blamed? Not if the dunces, by them “damned to everlasting fame,” were the unhappy aggressors. Dryden’s times, and possibly something in his own character,

trained his muse to polemics. His pen was active in literary controversies, which were never without a full infusion of personalities. More thoroughly moved at one time against one offender—though the history of the feud is in some parts imperfectly traceable—he compelled the clouds and hurled the lightning, in verse, on the doomed head of Thomas Shadwell. The invention of the poem entitled *Mac-Flecno* is very simple. Richard Flecno was a voluminous writer, and exceedingly bad poet—a name of scorn already in the kingdom of letters. Dryden supposes him to be the King of Dullness, who, advanced in years, will abdicate his well-possessed throne. He selects Shadwell from amongst his numerous offspring, all the Dunces, as the son or Dunce the most nearly resembling himself—hence the name of the poem—and appoints him his successor. That is the whole plan. The verse flows unstinted from the full urn of Dryden. The perfect ease, and the tone of mastery characteristic of him, are felt throughout. He amuses himself with laughing at his rival, and the amusement remains to all time; for all who, having felt the pleasure of wit, are the foes of the Dunces. It is not a laboured poem—it is a freak of wit. You cannot imagine him attaching much importance to the scarcely two hundred lines, thrown off in a few gleeful outpourings. To us, Shadwell is *nothing*. He is a phantom, an impersonation. His Dunceness is exaggerated, for he was a writer of some talent in one walk; but being selected for the throne, it was imperative to make him Dunce all through. To us, therefore, he is merely a Type; and we judge the strokes of Dryden in their universality, not asking if they were truly applicable to his victim, but whether they express pointedly and poignantly the repulsion entertained by Wit for Dullness. In this enlarged sense and power we feel it as poetry. When the father, encouraging his heir, says—

“And when false flowers of rhet’ric thou wouldst cull,
Trust Nature; do not labour to be dull;
But, write thy best, and top”——

Nothing can be happier. The quiet assumption of Dullness for the highest point of desirable human attainment—the good-natured and indulgent parental concern of the wish to save the younger emulator of his own glory from spending superfluous pains on a consummation sure to come of itself—the *confidence* of the veteran Dullard in the blood of the race,

and in the tried undegenerate worth of his successor—the sufficient direction of a life and reign comprehended, summed up, concentrated in the one master-precept—“do not labour to be dull”—are inimitable. You feel the high artist, whom experience has made bold; and you feel your own imagination roused to conceive the universe of Dunces, each yielding to the attraction of his genius, fluttering his pinions with an exquisite grace, and all, without labour or purpose, arriving at the goal predestined by nature and fate.

We know of no good reason why, for the delectation of myriads in their minority, *Maga* should not give *MAC-FLECNOR* entire; but lest old and elderly gentlemen should think it too much extract, she gives all she can, and lets you dream the rest.

“Now Empress Fame had publish’d the renown
Of Shadwell’s coronation through the Town.
Rous’d by report of fame, the nations meet,
From near Bunhill, and distant Watling-street.
No Persian carpets spread th’ imperial way,
But scatter’d limbs of mangled poets lay;
From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies, and reliques of the bum.
Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby, there lay,
But loads of Shadwell almost chok’d the way.
Bilk’d stationers, for yeomen, stood prepar’d,
And Herringman was captain of the guard.
The hoary prince in majesty appear’d,
High on a throne of his own labours rear’d;
At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
Rome’s other hope, and pillar of the state:
His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
And lambent Dullness play’d around his face.
As Hannibal did to the altars come,
Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome;
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
That he till death true Dullness would maintain;
And, in his father’s right, and realm’s defence,
Ne’er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.
The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office, and as priest by trade.
In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
He plac’d a mighty mug of potent ale;
Love’s kingdom to his right he did convey,
At once his sceptre, and his rule of sway;
Whose righteous lore the Prince had practis’d young,
And from whose loins recorded *Psychè* sprang.
His temples, last, with poppies were o’erspread,
That, nodding, seem’d to consecrate his head.

Just at the point of time, if Fame not lie,
 On his left hand twelve rev'rend owls did fly.
 So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,
 Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
 Th' admiring throng loud acclamations make,
 And omens of his future empire take.
 The sire then shook the honours of his head,
 And, from his brows, damps of oblivion shed,
 Full on the filial Dullness: long he stood,
 Repelling from his breast the raging god;
 At length burst out in the prophetic mood.
 'Heav'n's bless my son, from Ireland let him reign
 To fair Barbadoes on the western main;
 Of his dominion may no end be known,
 And greater than his father's be his throne;
 Beyond Love's kingdom let him stretch his pen!
 He paus'd, and all the people cry'd, 'Amen.'
 Then thus continu'd he: 'My son, advance
 Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
 Success let others teach; learn thou from me
 Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
 Let virtuosos in five years be writ;—
 Yet not one thought accuse thy toil—of wit.
 Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage,
 Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage;
 Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
 And, in their folly, show the writer's wit;
 Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,
 And justify their author's want of sense.
 Let them be all by thy own model made
 Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid;
 That they to future ages may be known,
 Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own.
 Nay, let thy men of wit, too, be the same,
 All full of thee, and diff'ring but in name.
 But let no alien Sedley interpose,
 To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
 And when false flowers of rhet'ric thou wouldst cull,
 Trust Nature; do not labour to be dull;
 But, write thy best and top: and, in each line,
 Sir Formal's oratory will be thine:
 Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill,
 And does thy northern dedications fill.
 Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,
 By arrogating Johnson's hostile name.
 Let father Flecnoe fire thy mind with praise,
 And uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.
 Thou art my blood, where Johnson has no part:
 What share have we—in nature or in art?
 Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,
 And rail at arts he did not understand?

Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,
 Or swept the dust in *Psychè's* humble strain?
 Where sold he bargains, Whip-stitch, Kiss my —,
 Promis'd a play, and dwindled to a farce?
 When did his muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
 As thou whole *Eth'rege* dost transfuse to thine?
 But so transfus'd as oil and waters flow;
 His always floats above, thine sinks below.
 This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
 New humours to invent for each new play;
 This is that boasted bias of thy mind,
 By which, one way, to dullness 'tis inclined:
 Which makes thy writings lean, on one side, still;
 And in all changes, *that* way bends thy will.
 Nor let thy mountain-belly make pretence
 Of likeness; thine's a tympany of sense.
 A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,
 But sure thou art but a kilderkin of wit.
 Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep;
 Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.
 With whate'er gall thou sett'st thyself to write,
 Thy inoffensive satires never bite.
 In thy felonious heart, though venom lies,
 It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
 Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
 In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
 Leave writing Plays, and chuse for thy command
 Some peaceful province in Acrostic land:
 There thou may'st wings display, and altars raise,
 And torture one poor word ten thousand ways;
 Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,
 Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy late.
 "He said; but his last words were scarcely heard;
 For Bruce and Longvil had a trap prepar'd,
 And down they sent the yet-declaining bard.
 Sinking, he left his druggert robe behind,
 Borne upwards by a subterranean wind:
 The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
 With double portion of his father's art."

The *Mac-Flecnœ* of Dryden suggested—no more—the *Dunciad* of Pope. There is nothing of transcript. Flecnœ, who,

"In prose and verse, was own'd without dispute,
 THROUGH ALL THE REALMS OF NONSENSE ABSOLUTE,"

settles the succession of the state on Shadwell. That idea Pope adopts; but the Kingdom of Dullness is remodeled. It is no longer an aged monarch, who, tired out with years and the toils of empire, gladly transfers the sceptre to younger

and more efficient hands, but the GODDESS OF DULLNESS who is concerned for her dominion, and elects her new vicegerent on the demise of the Crown. The scale is immeasurably aggrandized—multitudes of dunces are comprehended—the composition is elaborate—the mock-heroic, admirable in Dryden, is carried to perfection, and we have, *sui generis*, a regular epic poem.

In the year 1727, amongst the works first given to the public in the *Miscellanies* of Pope and Swift, was the treatise of Martinus Scriblerus, *Περὶ Βαθύων*, or the *Art of Sinking in Poetry*. The exquisite wit and humour of this piece, which were almost wholly Pope's, enraged the Dunces to madness; and the mongrel pack opened in full cry, with barbarous dissonance, against their supposed whipper-in. Never was there such a senseless yell: for the philosophical treatise "On the Profund" overflows with amenity and good-nature. Pope is all the while at play—diverting himself in innocent recreation; and, of all the satires that ever were indited, it is in spirit the most inoffensive to man, woman, and child. The Dunces, however, swore that its wickedness went beyond the Devil's, and besought the world to pay particular attention to the sixth chapter as *supra-Satanic*. Therein Martinus ranges "the confined and less copious geniuses under proper classes, and, the better to give their pictures to the reader, under the name of animals." The animals are Flying Fishes, Swallows, Ostriches, Parrots, Didappers, Porpoises, Frogs, Eels and Tortoises. Each animal is characterized in a few words, that prove Pope to have been a most observant zoologist; and some profundists, classified according to that arrangement, are indicated by the initial letters of their names. The chapter is short, and the style concise—consisting of but four pages. Some of the initial letters had been set down at random; but profundists rose up, with loud vociferation, to claim them for their own; and *gli animali parlanti*, on foot, wing, fin, "or belly prone," peopled the booksellers' shops. C. G., "perplexed in the extreme," was the cause of perplexity to others, figuring now as a flying-fish, and now as a porpoise. While J. W. was not less problematical—now an Eel, and now a Didapper.

"Threats of vengeance," says Roscoe, "resounded from all quarters, and the press groaned under the various attempts at retaliation to which this production gave rise. Before the publication of the *Dunciad*, upwards of sixty different libels,

books, papers, and copies of verses, had been published against Pope." The allied forces—*væ victis!*—published a *Popiad*. Threats of personal violence were frequently held out—a story was circulated of his having been whipped naked with rods; and, to extend the ridicule, an advertisement, with his initials, was inserted in the *Daily Post*, giving the lie to the scandal. Were such brutalities to be let pass unpunished? Dr. Johnson says that "Pope was by his own confession the aggressor"—and so say Dr. Warton and Mr. Bowles. The aggressor! Why, the Dunces had been maligning him all their days, long before the treatise on the *Profund*. And that is bad law, indeed, that recognizes a natural right in blockheads to be blackguards, and gives unlimited license of brutality towards any man of genius who may have been ironical on the tribe. But then, quoth some hypocritical wiseacre, is not satire wicked? Pope was a Christian; and should have learned to forgive. Stop a bit.

We talk of poets and books, as if we who occupy the tribunal were, during that moment, at least, miracles of clear-sighted incorruptible justice, and of all the virtues generally. Conscience re-asserts her whole sway in our minds as soon as we sit on other men's merits and demerits; almost the innocence of Eden re-establishes itself in our breasts. Self-delusion! Men we are at the guilty bar—Men on the blameless bench. There is a disorderly spirit in every one of us—a spice of iniquity. Human nature forgives a crime for a jest. Not that crimes and jests are commensurable or approximable; but they are before the same judge. He dislikes, or professes to dislike, the crime. Indubitably, and without a pretence, he likes the jest. Here, then, is an opportunity given of balancing the liking against the disliking; and, under that form, the jest against the crime. If he likes the jest more than he dislikes the crime, the old saw holds good—

"Solvuntur risu tabulæ, tu missus abibis."

Well, then, the wit of Dryden and Pope is irresistible. What follows! For having contented our liking, we let them do anything that they like. Poor Og! poor Shadwell! poor Bayes! poor Cibber! He sprawls and kicks in the gripe of the giant, and we—as if we had sat at bull-fights and the shows of gladiators—when the blood trickles we are tickled, and—oh, shame!—we laugh.

The *DUNCIAD* suffers under the law of compensations. As the renown of the actor is intense whilst he lives, and languishes with following generations, so is it with poems that embrace with ardour the Present. When the Present has become the Past, they are, or at least their liveliest edge is, past too. No commentary can restore the fiery hates of Dante—nor the repellent scorn of *Hudibras*—nor the glow of laughter to *MAC-FLECKNOE* and the *DUNCIAD*. Eternal things are eternal—transitory things are transitory. The transitory have lost their zest—the eternal have their revenge.

Yet, a hundred years and more after the *DUNCIAD*, a critic may wish that the matter had been a little more diligently moulded, with more consideration of readers to come—that there had been less of mere names—that every *Gyaa* and *Cloanthus* had somewhat unfolded his own individuality upon the stage—had been his own commentary—had, by a word or two, painted himself to everlasting posterity, in hue, shape, and gesture, as he stood before the coteremporary eye. 'Tis an idle speculation! The thing, by its inspiring passion, personal anger and offence, belonged to the day. The poet gives it up to the day. He uses his poetical machinery to grace and point a ridicule that is to tell home to the breasts of living men—that is to be felt tingling by living flesh—that is to tinge living cheeks, if they can still redden with blushes.

Yet, for all that, the *Dunciad* still lives; ay, in spite of seeming inconsistency, we declare it to be immortal. For, build with what materials she may, the works of genius that stand in the world of thought survive all time's mutations, cemented by a spirit she alone can interfuse. It must not be said that a poem shelved is dead and buried. Open it at midnight, and the morning is in your chamber.

We love to commune with the rising and new-risen generations; elderly people we do not much affect; and, for that we are old ourselves, we are averse from the old. Now, of our well-beloved rising and new-risen generations, how many thousands may there be in these islands who have read the *Dunciad*? Not so many as to make needless in our pages a few explanatory sentences respecting its first appearance, and the not inconsiderable changes of form it was afterwards made to assume. At the head of the *Dunces* at first stood one *Theobald*, who, with some of the requisite knowledge and aptitude for a reviser of the text of *Shakspeare*,

was a poor creature, and a dishonest one, but too feeble and too obscure for the place. Fifteen years afterwards, (1742,) at the instigation of Warburton, Pope added to the Dunciad a Fourth Book. In it there was *one line, and one line only*, about Colley Cibber.

"She mounts the throne: her head a cloud conceal'd,
In broad effulgence all below reveal'd.
(Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines),
Soft on her lap her Laureate Son reclines."

Dr. Johnson calls that an acrimonious attack! "to which the provocation is not easily discoverable;" and says "that the severity of the satire left Cibber no longer any patience." The Doctor speaks, too, of the "incessant and unappeasable malignity" of Pope towards Cibber, and takes the part of that worthy in the quarrel. Colley was absolutely poet-laureate of England; and having no longer any patience in his pride, "gave the town" an abusive pamphlet, in which he swore that he would no longer tamely submit to such insults, but fight Pope with his own weapons. Dr. Johnson says—"Pope had now been enough acquainted with human life to know, *if his passion had not been too powerful for his understanding*, that from a contention like his with Cibber, the world seeks nothing but diversion, which is given at the expense of the higher character." Pope had no contention with Cibber. Two or three times he had dropped him a blistering word of contempt—once a word of praise to the *Careless Husband*. But now Pope eyed the brazen bully, and saw in him the proper hero of the Dunciad. Theobald vacated the throne, and retired into private life. Cibber was made to reign in his stead—and in the lines written by Pope on the coronation, the monarch's character is drawn, if we mistake not, in a style that sufficiently vindicates the Poet from the Doctor's charge, "that his passion had been too powerful for his understanding." True, "the world seeks diversion," and she had it here to her heart's content; but not from any undignified "contention" with Cibber, which Pope disdained, but from matchless poetry that "damned to everlasting fame." "Cibber," says Johnson, "had nothing to lose. When Pope had exhausted all his malignity upon him, he would rise in the esteem both of his friends and his enemies." Cibber, then, in the Dunciad, had a triumph over Pope!! Good.

But how, you ask, did Pope contrive to place Cibber in Theobald's shoes, without injury to the rest of the poem? Why, he did not place Cibber in Theobald's shoes. Theobald walked off in his shoes into the shades. Samuel says, that by the substitution, Pope has "depraved his poem"—inasmuch as he has given to Cibber the "old books, the cold pedantry and sluggish pertinacity of Theobald." That is not true. Compare the places in the original *Dunciad*, in which Theobald figures at large, with that now filled by Cibber, and you will admire by what wizard power the transformation is effected. Many lines, far too good to be lost, are retained—and among them there may be a few more characteristic of the old dunce than the new. But Cibber is Cibber all over—notwithstanding; nor needed Joseph Warton, who was as ready to indulge in a nap as any one we have known, to object that "to slumber in the goddess's lap was adapted to Theobald's stupidity, not to the vivacity of his successor." Pope knew better—

"Dulness with transport eyes the lively Dunce,
Remembering she herself was Pertness once."

Here he comes.

"In each she marks her image full exprest,
But chief in Bayes's monster-breeding breast;
Bayes, form'd by Nature's Stage and Town to bless,
And act, and be, a coxcomb with success.
Dulness with transport eyes the lively Dunce,
Remembering she herself was Pertness once.
Now (Shame to Fortune!) an ill run at play
Blank'd his bold visage, and a thin third day;
Swearing and supperless the hero sate,
Blasphem'd his gods, the dice, and damn'd his fate;
Then gnaw'd his pen, then dasht it on the ground,
Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound;
Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there,
Yet wrote and flounder'd on in mere despair.
Round him much embryo, much abortion lay,
Much future ode, and abdicated play;
Nonsense precipitate, like running lead,
That slipt through cracks and zigzags of the head;
All that on Folly Frenzy could beget,
Fruits of dull heat, and sooterkins of wit.
Next, o'er his books his eyes began to roll,
In pleasing memory of all he stole;
How here he sip'd, how there he plunder'd snug,
And suck'd all o'er like an industrious bug.

Here lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes, and here
 The frippery of crucify'd Molière;
 There hapless Shakspeare, yet of Tibbald sore,
 Wish'd he had blotted for himself before.
 The rest on outside merit but presume,
 Or serve (like other fools) to fill a room;
 Such with their shelves as due proportion hold,
 Or their fond parents dress'd in red and gold;
 Or where the pictures for the page atone,
 And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own.
 Here swells the shelf with Ogilby the Great;
 There, stamp'd with arms, Newcastle shines complete;
 Here all his suff'ring brotherhood retire,
 And 'scape the martyrdom of jakes and fire:
 A Gothic library! of Greece and Rome
 Well purg'd, and worthy Settle, Banks and Broome.

"But, high above, more solid learning shone,
 The Classics of an age that heard of none:
 There Caxton slept, with Wynkyn at his side,
 One clasp'd in wood, and one in strong cow-hide;
 There, sav'd by spice, like mummies, many a year,
 Dry bodies of divinity appear;
 De Lyra there a dreadful front extends,
 And here the groaning shelves Philemon bends.

"Of these twelve volumes, twelve of amplest size,
 Redeem'd from tapers and defrauded pies,
 Inspir'd he seizes: these an altar raise;
 An hecatomb of pure, unsully'd lays
 That altar crowns; a folio common-place
 Finds the whole pile, of all his works the base:
 Quartos, Octavos, shape the less'ning pyre,
 A twisted birth-day ode completes the spire.

"Then he, great tamer of all human art!
 First in my care, and ever at my heart;
 Dulness! whose good old cause I yet defend,
 With whom my Muse began, with whom shall end,
 Ere since Sir Fopling's periwig was praise,
 To the last honours of the Butts and Bays;
 O thou! of bus'ness the directing soul!
 To this our head like bias to the bowl,
 Which, as more pond'rous, made its aim more true,
 Obliquely waddling to the mark in view;
 O! ever gracious to perplex'd mankind,
 Still spread a healing mist before the mind;
 And, lest we err by Wit's wild dancing light,
 Secure us kindly in our native night.
 Or, if to wit a coxcomb make pretence,
 Guard the sure barrier between that and sense;
 Or quite unravel all the reas'ning thread,
 And hang some curious cobweb in its stead!

As, forc'd from wind-guns, lead itself can fly,
 And pond'rous slugs cut swiftly through the sky;
 As clocks to weight their nimble motion owe,
 The wheels above urged by the load below;
 Me Emptiness and Dulness could inspire,
 And were my elasticity and fire.
 Some demon stole my pen (forgive th' offence)
 And once betrayed me into common sense:
 Else all my prose and verse were much the same;
 This prose on stilts, that, poetry fall'n lame.
 Did on the stage my fops appear confin'd?
 My life gave ampler lessons to mankind.
 Did the dead letter unsuccessful prove?
 The brisk example never fail'd to move.
 Yet sure, had Heaven decreed to save the state,
 Heaven had decreed these works a longer date.
 Could Troy be saved by any single hand,
 This gray goose weapon must have made her stand.
 What can I now? my Fletcher cast aside,
 Take up the Bible, once my better guide?
 Or tread the path by vent'rous heroes trod,
 This box my thunder, this right hand my God?
 Or chair'd at White's amidst the doctors sit,
 Teach oaths to gamesters, and to nobles wit?
 Or bidst thou rather party to embrace?
 (A friend to Party thou, and all her race;
 'Tis the same rope at diff'rent ends they twist;
 To Dulness Ridpath is as dear as Mist.)
 Shall I, like Curtius, desperate in my zeal,
 O'er head and ears plunge for the commonweal?
 Or rob Rome's ancient geese of all their glories,
 And cackling, save the monarchy of Tories?
 Hold—to the minister I more incline;
 To serve his cause, O Queen, is serving thine.
 And see! thy very Gazetteers give o'er,
 Ev'n Ralph repents, and Henley writes no more.
 What then remains? Ourselves. Still, still remain
 Ciberian forehead, and Ciberian brain.
 This brazen brightness, to the 'squire so dear;
 This polish'd hardness, that reflects the peer;
 This arch absurd, that wit and fool delights,
 This mess, toss'd up of Hockley-hole and White's;
 Where dukes and butchers join to wreath my crown,
 At once the Bear and Fiddle of the Town.
 "O born, in sin and forth in folly brought!
 Works damn'd, or to be damn'd; (your father's fault.)
 Go, purify'd by flames, ascend the sky,
 My better and more Christian progeny!
 Unstain'd, untouch'd, and yet in maiden sheets,
 While all your smutty sisters walk the streets.

Ye shall not beg, like gratis-given Bland,
 Sent with a pass and vagrant through the land;
 Nor sail with Ward, to Ape-and-monkey climes,
 Where vile Mundungus trucks for viler rhymes.
 Not sulphur-tipt, emblaze an ale-house fire!
 Not wrap up oranges, to pelt your sire!
 O! pass more innocent, in infant state,
 To the mild limbo of our father Tate:
 Or peaceably forgot, at once be blest
 In Shadwell's bosom with eternal rest!
 Soon to that mass of nonsense to return,
 Where things destroy'd are swept to things unborn."

The eyes of the goddess have been fixed, with sleepy fondness more than maternal, upon him, her chosen instrument, during all his address; and we can imagine the frowsy Frow weeping big fat tears with him as he weeps. Pope's "passion had *not* been too powerful for his understanding," nor for his imagination neither, when he was inditing the following pathetic and picturesque lines:—

"With that a tear (portentous sign of grace!)
 Stole from the master of the seven-fold face,
 And thrice he lifted high the Birth-day brand,
 And thrice he dropt it from his quivering hand;
 Then lights the structure, with averted eyes;
 The rolling smoke involves the sacrifice.
 The opening clouds disclose each work by turns;
 Now flames the Cid, and now Perolla burns;
 Great Cæsar roars, and hisses in the fires;
 King John in silence modestly expires;
 No merit now the dear Nonjuror claims;
 Molière's old stubble in a moment flames.
 Tears gush'd again, as from pale Priam's eyes,
 When the last blaze sent Ilion to the skies.
 Roused by the light, old Dulness heav'd the head,
 Then snatched a sheet of Thulé from her bed;
 Sudden she flies, and whelms it o'er the pyre,
 Down sink the flames, and with a hiss expire."

What next? The compact Argument informs us *she* forthwith reveals herself to him, transports him to her Temple, unfolds her arts, and initiates him into her mysteries; then announcing the death of Eusden, the poet-laureate, anoints him, carries him to court, and proclaims him successor. The close of the Book was as much improved as the opening by the changes consequent on the substitution of Cibber for Theobald. In 1727, when the poem was composed, Eusden, "a drunken parson," wore the laurel; but now Cibber had

been for years one of the successors of Spenser, and of the predecessors of Wordsworth—though indeed that last fact could not be known to Pope—and well he deserved this still higher elevation. And here again we must dissent from Dr. Johnson's judgment, "that by transferring the same ridicule (*not the same*) from one to another, he destroyed its efficacy; for, by showing that what he said of one he was ready to say of another, he reduced himself to the insignificance of his own magpye, who from his cage calls cuckold at a venture." We love and honour the sage, but here he is a Sump.

Oh! do read the Second Book, for we can afford but a few extracts; and, to whet you up, shall prate to you a few minutes about it.

The two ancient kings of heroic song have left us exemplars of Games. The occasions are similar and mournful, although the contests are inspired by, and inspire a jocund mood. At the funeral of Patroclus, Achilles appoints eight games. He gives prizes for a chariot-race, a cestus-fight, a wrestling-match, a foot-race, a lance-fight, a disk-hurling, a strife of archery and of darters. Æneas, on the first anniversary of his father's funeral, proposes five trials of skill—for the chariot-race of Homer, suitably to the posture of the Trojan affairs, a sailing match; then, the foot-race, the terrible cestus, archery, and lastly, the beautiful equestrian tournament of Young Troy. The English Homer of the Dunces treads in the footsteps of his august predecessors, and celebrates, with imitated solemnities, a joyous day—that which elevates the arch-Dunce to the throne. Here too we have games, but with a dissimilitude in similitude. He adopts an intermediate number, six. The first is exceedingly fanciful and whimsical. The goddess creates the phantom of a poet. It has the shape of a contemptible swindler in literature, a plagiarist without bounds, named More. He is pursued by two booksellers, and vanishes from the grasp of him who has first clutched the fluttering shade. "Gentle Dulness ever loves a joke;" and the aforesaid admirable jest having kindled inextinguishable laughter in heaven, Gentle Dulness repeats it (she loves to repeat herself), and starts three phantoms in the likenesses respectively of Congreve, Addison, Prior. Three booksellers give chase, and catch Heaven knows what, three foolish forgotten names. For the second exertion of talent, confined to the booksellers Osborne and Curl, the prize is the Fair Eliza, and Curl is Victor. Osborne, too, is suitably re-

warded; but as this game borders on the indelicate, it shall be nameless. Hitherto, after the simplicity of ancient manners, there have been contentions of bodily powers. But the games of the Dunces belong to an advanced age of the world, and a part of them are accordingly spiritual. The third falls under this category. A patron is proposed as the prize. He who can best tickle shall carry him off. The dedicators fall to their task with great zeal and adroitness. Alas! there steps in a young thief of a competitor unknown to Phœbus, but deep in the counsels of Venus! He, aided by the goddess, and a votaress of her order whom the goddess deposes, avails himself of the noble prize's most susceptible side,

"And marches off, his Grace's secretary."

The fourth game sets up a desirable rivalry with monkeys and asses. Who shall chatter the fastest? Who the loudest shall bray?

———"Three cat-calls be the bribe
Of him whose chat'ring shames the monkey tribe,
And his this drum, whose hoarse heroic bass
Drowns the loud clarion of the braying ass."

So numerous are the monkey-mimics that the claims of the chatteringers cannot be adjusted—

"Hold! (cried the Queen) a cat-call each shall win;
Equal your merits! equal is your din!
But that this well-disputed game may end,
Sound forth, my Brayers, and the welkin rend."

Sir Richard Blackmore, with his six epics and sundry other poems, brays louder and longer than the most leathern or brazen of the other throats; Chancery Lane and Westminster Hall taking prominent part in the reverberating orchestra. The place is to be ranked amongst the famous echo-descriptions, and beats Drayton's and Wordsworth's hollow.

The fifth game is DIVING.

"This labour past, by Bridewell all descend
(As morning pray'r and flagellation end)
To where Fleet-ditch, with disemboing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The king of dykes! than whom, no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.
'Here strip, my children! here at once leap in,
Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel,
Or dark dexterity of groping well:

Who flings most filth, and wide pollutes around
The stream, be his the Weekly Journals bound;
A pig of lead to him who dives the best;
A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest.'

"In naked majesty Oldmixon stands,
And, Milo-like, surveys his arms and hands;
Then sighing thus, 'And am I now threescore?
Ah, why, ye gods! should two and two make four?'
He said, and climbed a stranded lighter's height,
Shot to the black abyss, and plung'd downright:
The senior's judgment all the crowd admire,
Who but to sink the deeper rose the higher.

"Next Smedley div'd; slow circles dimpled o'er
The quaking mud, that clos'd and op'd no more.
All look, all sigh, and call on Smedley lost;
Smedley in vain resounds through all the coast.

"Then ** essay'd; scarce vanish'd out of sight,
He buoys up instant, and returns to light;
He bears no tokens of the sabler streams,
And mounts far off among the swans of Thames.

"True to the bottom, see Concauen creep,
A cold, long-winded native of the deep;
If perseverance gain the diver's prize,
Not everlasting Blackmore this denies:
No noise, no stir, no motion canst thou make,
Th' unconscious stream sleeps o'er thee like a lake.

"Next plung'd a feeble, but a desperate pack,
With each a sickly brother at his back:
Sons of a day! just buoyant on the flood,
Then number'd with the puppies in the mud.
Ask ye their names? I could as soon disclose
The names of these blind puppies as of those.
Fast by, like Niobe, (her children gone,)
Sits Mother Osborne, stupify'd to stone!
And monumental brass this record bears,

'These *are*, ah no! these *were* the Gazetteers!'

"Not so bold Arnall; with a weight of scull
Furious he drives, precipitately dull.
Whirlpools and storms in circling arm invest,
With all the might of gravitation blest.
No crab more active in the dirty dance,
Downward to climb, and backward to advance,
He brings up half the bottom on his head,
And loudly claims the Journal and the Lead.

"The plunging Prelate, and his pond'rous Grace,
With holy envy gave one layman place.
When lo! a burst of thunder shook the flood,
Slow rose a form in majesty of Mud;
Shaking the horrors of his sable brows,
And each ferocious feature grim with ooze.

Greater he looks, and more than mortal stares;
Then thus the wonders of the deep declares.

"First he relates how, sinking to the chin,
Smit with his mien, the mud-nymphs suck'd him in;
How young Lutetia, softer than the down,
Nigrina black, and Merdamente brown,
Vy'd for his love in jetty bow'rs below,
As Hylas fair was ravish'd long ago.
Then sung, how shown him by the Nut-brown maids
A branch of Styx here rises from the shades,
That tintured as it runs with Lethe's streams,
And wafting vapours from the land of dreams
(As under seas Alpheus' secret sluice
Bears Pisa's offering to his Arethuse),
Pours into Thames; and hence the mingled wave
Intoxicates the pert, and lulls the grave:
Here brisker vapours o'er the Temple creep;
There, all from Paul's to Aldgate drink and sleep.

"Thence to the banks where rev'rend bards repose,
They led him soft; each rev'rend bard arose;
And Milbourn chief, deputed by the rest,
Gave him the cassock, surcingle, and vest.
'Receive (he said) these robes, which once were mine.
Dullness is sacred in a sound divine.'
He ceas'd, and spread the robe; the crowd confess
The rev'rend flamen in his lengthen'd dress.
Around him wide a sable army stand,
A low-born, cell-bred, selfish, servile band,
Prompt or to guard or stab, to saint or damn
Heav'n's Swiss, who fight for any god, or man.

"Through Lud's famed gates, along the well-known Fleet,
Rolls the black troop, and overshades the street,
Till show'rs of sermons, characters, essays,
In circling fleeces whiten all the ways:
So clouds replenish'd from some bog below
Mount in dark volumes, and descend in snow."

The last of the contests offers one or two difficulties. The goddess will appoint her Supreme Judge in the Court of Criticism, and she ordains a trial of qualifications. This is the manner of ordeal. A dull piece in prose, and a dull piece in verse, is to be read aloud. The auditor who remains the longest awake carries the election. The two preparations of Morphine exhibited, are a sermon of H—ley's (Henley or Hoadley?) and Blackmore's Prince Arthur. Six candidate heroes present themselves, three from the University, and three from the Inns of Court. Some explanation seems to be required of an arrangement which allots extraordinarily high promotion in the State of Dullness to a real and prodigious

effort of mental energy. What explanation can be given? Are the affairs of Dullness conducted, in some respects, by the same rules which obtain in the Commonwealth of Wit? Is it held there, as here, that the first step to be taken, in order to forming a judgment of any book, is to read it? Was it prudently considered that the dullest of critics can read only as long as his eyes are open? and that the function of judge must incessantly bring under his cognizance papaverous volumes, with which only a superhuman endowment of vigilance could hope successfully to contend? so that the goddess is driven, by the necessity of the case, to admit within the circuit of her somnolent sway, a virtue to which she is naturally and peculiarly hostile? Or are we mistaken in supposing that vigour of mind really qualifies for hearing a dull book through? Is it dullness itself that the most ably listens to dullness? We are out of our element, we presume, for we arrive at no satisfactory solution.

Be all this as it may, the method of competition fails of accomplishing its end; and the chair, after all, is left vacant. Not that the divinity has in the least misjudged the way of operation proper to her beloved tones; but she has miscalculated the strength of her sons. Every dull head of the congregated multitude—of the illustrious competitors—and of the two officiating readers, bows overcome. There is, perforce, an end; and the chair is yet open to the whole kingdom.

The trial involves another matter of some doubt. Do the two clerks read aloud at one and the same time? and to the same audience? The description conveys the impression that they do. If so, one might have been tempted to fear that the sermon and the poem might have neutralized each other; but, on the contrary, the mixture worked like a patent.

Where has Cibber been all the while, and what has he been doing? "*What su'd he hae been doin'?*" *Sittin' on his raine loopin'-on-etane—takin' frae him.*" Joe Warton complains that he is too much of a passive hero. Why, he is not so active as Achilles, or even Diomed; yet in Book Second he is equal to Æneas. He is almost as long-winded, and excels the Pious in this, that he braves a fire of his own raising, whereas the other flies from one kindled much against his will—

"High on a gorgeous seat, that far outshone
 Henley's gilt tub, or Flecknoe's Irish throne,
 Or that whereon her Curls the public pours
 All-bounteous, fragrant grains and golden showers,
 GREAT CIBBER SATE!

—All eyes direct their rays
 On him, and crowds turn coxcombs as they gaze!"

Is that being passive? The crowds are passive—not he, surely, who, in the potent prime of coxcombhood, without shifting his seat of honour, breathes over all his subjects such family resemblance that they seem one brotherhood, sprung from his own royal loins. Besides, who ever heard, in an Epic poem, of a hero contending in games instituted in his own honour? Yet we do not fear to say, that had he, inspired by the spectacle of Curl and Osborne displaying their prowess for the fair Eliza, leapt from his gorgeous "seat," and amid the shouts of the lieges, in rainbow glory joined the contest, that infallibly he had won the day. We have the authority of Aristotle on our side.

You cry again for an extract. Here is a superb one:—

"Ye Critics! in whose heads, as equal scales,
 I weigh what author's heaviness prevails;
 Which most conduce to soothe the soul in slumbers,
 My H—ley's periods, or my Blackmore's numbers;
 Attend the trial we propose to make:
 If there be man who o'er such works can wake,
 Sleep's all-subduing charms who dares defy,
 And boasts Ulysses' ear with Argus' eye;
 To him we grant our amplest pow'rs to sit
 Judge of all present, past, and future wit;
 To caviil, censure, dictate, right or wrong,
 Full and eternal privilege of tongue."
 "Three college sophs, and three pert Templars came,
 The same their talents, and their tastes the same;
 Each prompt to query, answer and debate,
 And smit with love of poesy and prate.
 The pond'rous books two gentle readers bring;
 The heroes sit, the vulgar form a ring.
 The clam'rous crowd is hush'd with mugs of mum,
 Till all, wou'd equal, send a gen'ral hum.
 Then mount the clerks, and in one lazy tone
 Through the long, heavy, painful page drawl on;
 Soft creeping, words on words, the sense compose,
 At ev'ry line they stretch, they yawn, they doze.
 As to soft gales top-heavy pines bow low
 Their heads, and lift them as they cease to blow;

Thus oft they rear, and oft the head decline,
 As breathe, or pause, by fits, the airs divine.
 And now to this side, now to that they nod,
 As verse, or prose, infuse the drowsy god.
 Thrice Budgel aim'd to speak, but thrice suppress
 By potent Arthur, knock'd his chin and breast.
 Toland and Tindal, prompt at priests to jeer,
 Yet silent-bow'd to *Christ's no kingdom here*.
 Who sat the nearest, by the words o'ercome,
 Slept first; the distant nodded to the hum;
 Then down are roll'd the books; stretch'd o'er 'em lies
 Each gentle clerk, and muttering seals his eyes.
 As what a Dutchman plumps into the lakes,
 One circle first, and then a second makes;
 What dullness dropt among her sons imprest,
 Like motion from one circle to the rest:
 So from the midmost the nutation spreads,
 Round and more round, o'er all the *sea of heads*.
 At last Centlivre felt her voice to fail,
 Motteux himself unfinish'd left his tale.
 Boyer the state, and Law the stage gave o'er,
 Morgan and Mandeville could prate no more;
 Norton from Daniel and Ostroea sprung,
 Blessed with his father's front and mother's tongue,
 Hung silent down his never-blushing head,
 And all was hush'd, as Folly's self lay dead.
 "Thus the soft gifts of Sleep conclude the day,
 And stretch'd on bulks, as usual, poets lay.
 Why should I sing what bards the nightly Muse
 Did slumb'ring visit, and convey to stews;
 Who prouder march'd, with magistrates in state,
 To some fam'd round-house, ever-open gate!
 How Henley lay inspir'd beside a sink,
 And to mere mortals seem'd a priest in drink:
 While others, timely, to the neighb'ring Fleet
 (Haunt of the Muses) made their safe retreat."

Ulysses and Æneas present themselves alive and in the body, as visitors in the land of departed souls. A descent to the shades is not wanting in our Epos. It fills the whole Third Book. But our poet again manages a discreet difference in his imitation. Our Duncce hero visits Elysium *in a dream*; whilst he sleeps, his head recumbent on the lap of the goddess, in the innermost recesses of her sanctuary. His vision resembles the Trojan's rather than the Greek's adventure. "A slipshod sibyl,"

"In lofty madness meditating song,"

leads him. She seems to be typical of the half-crazed human

poetess, in usual sublime dishabille. Venerable shades of the Dull greet him. As in Virgil's Elysian fields a glimpse is afforded into the dark philosophy of human existence, and we see the Lethean bank crowded with spirits, who taste and become prepared to live again—so here. And as Æneas finds Anchises engaged in taking cognizance of the ghosts that are to animate Roman bodies, so here Cibber sees a great Patriarch of Dullness, Bavius (him of old classical renown), dipping in Lethe the souls that are to be born dull upon the earth. The poet cannot resist a slight deviation from the doctrine of his original. By the ancient theory the Lethean dip extinguishes the memory of a past life, of its faults, and of their punishment; and thence the willingness to inhabit the gross, earthly frame, as generated anew. But the dip of Bavius is more powerful; it quenches the faculties that are innate in a spirit, fitting it

“for a skull
Of solid proof, impenetrably dull.”

The subterranean traveler then falls in with the ghost of Elkanah Settle, who properly represents Anchises, and expounds the glories of the Kingdom of Dullness. Something is borrowed also from the vision of Adam, in the Eleventh Book of *Paradise Lost*. And something is original; for that which has been is declared as well as that which shall be; and the Kingdom of intellectual darkness to the earth's verge displayed in visible presentment, which the speaker interprets. The Emperor Chi Ho-am-ti, who ordered a universal conflagration of books throughout his celestial dominions—the multitude of barbarous sons which the populous North poured from her frozen loins to sweep in deluge away the civilization of the South—figure here. Here is Attila with his Huns. Here is the Mussulman. Here is Rome of the dark ages. Great Britain appears last—the dullness which has blessed, which blesses, and which shall bless her. We extract the prophetic part. The visioned progress of Dullness has reached the theatres; and some sixteen verses which contain—says Warton, well and truly—“some of the most lively and forcible descriptions anywhere to be found, and are a perfect pattern of a clear picturesque style,” call up into brilliant and startling apparition the ineffable monstrosities and impossibilities which constituted the theatrical spectacles of the day. The sight extorts the opening exclamation—

"What pow'r, he cries, what pow'r these wonders wrought?

Son, what thou seek'st is in thee! look and find
Each monster meets his likeness in thy mind.
Yet would'st thou more! in yonder cloud behold,
Whose sarsenet skirts are edg'd with flamy gold,
A matchless youth! his nod these worlds controls,
Wings the red lightning, and the thunder rolls.
Angel of Dulness, sent to scatter round
Her magic charms o'er all unclassic ground:
Yon' stars, yon' suns, he rears at pleasure higher,
Illumes their light, and sets their flames on fire.
Immortal Rich! how calm he sits at ease,
Midst snows of paper, and fierce hail of peace!
And proud his mistress' orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

"But lo! to dark encounter in mid air
New wizards rise; I see my Cibber there!
Booth in his cloudy tabernacle shrin'd;
On grinning dragons thou shalt mount the wind.
Dire is the conflict, dismal is the din,
Here shouts all Drury, there all Lincoln's Inn;
Contending theatres our empire raise,
Alike their labours, and alike their praise.

"And are these wonders, Son, to thee unknown?

Unknown to thee! these wonders are thy own.
These fate reserved to grace thy reign divine,
Foreseen by me, but ah! withheld from mine.
In Lud's old walls, though long I rul'd, renown'd
Far as loud Bow's stupendous bells resound;
Though my own aldermen conferr'd the bays,
To me committing their eternal praise.
Their full-fed heroes, their pacific may'rs,
Their annual trophies, and their monthly wars:
Though long my party built on me their hopes,
For writing pamphlets, and for roasting Popes;
Yet lo! in me what authors have to brag on!
Reduc'd at last to hiss in my own dragon.
Avert in Heav'n! that thou, my Cibber, e'er
Shouldst wag a serpent-tail in Smithfield fair;
Like the vile straw that's blown about the streets,
The needy poet sticks to all he meets;
Coach'd, carted, trod upon, now loose, now fast,
And carry'd off in some dog's tail at last.
Happier thy fortunes! like a rolling stone,
Thy giddy dulness still shall lumber on,
Safe in its heaviness, shall never stray,
But lick up every blockhead in the way.
Thee shall the Patriot, thee the Courtier taste,
And ev'ry year be duller than the last;
Till raised from booths, to theatre, to court,
Her seat imperial Dulness shall transport.

Already Opera prepares the way,
 The sure forerunner of her gentle sway:
 Let her thy heart next drabs and dice, engage,
 The third mad passion of thy dotting age.
 Teach thou the warling Polypheme to roar,
 And scream thyself as none e'er screamed before!
 To aid our cause, if Heav'n thou canst not bend,
 Hell thou shalt move; for Faustus is our friend;
 Pluto with Cato, thou for this shalt join,
 And link the Mourning Bride to Proserpine.
 Grub Street! thy fall should men and gods conspire,
 Thy stage shall stand, insure it but from fire.
 Another Æschylus appears! prepare
 For new abortions, all ye pregnant fair!
 In flames like Semele's, be brought to bed,
 While op'ning hell spouts wildfire at your head.
 "Now, Bavius, take the poppy from thy brow,
 And place it here! here, all ye heroes, bow!
 "This, this is he, foretold by ancient rhymes:
 Th' Augustus born to bring Saturnian times.
 Signs following signs lead on the mighty year!
 See! the dull stars roll round and re-appear.
 See, see, our own true Phœbus wears the bays!
 Our Midas sits Lord Chancellor of plays!
 On poet's tombs see Benson's titles writ!
 Lo! Ambrose Phillips is preferr'd for wit!
 See under Ripley rise a new Whitehall,
 While Jones' and Boyle's united labours fall:
 While Wren with sorrow to the grave descends,
 Gay dies unpension'd, with a hundred friends;
 Hibernian politics, O Swift! thy fate;
 And Pope's ten years to comment and translate.
 "Proceed, great days! 'till Learning fly the shore,
 Till Birch shall blush with noble blood no more;
 Till Thames see Eton's sons for ever play,
 Till Westminster's whole year be holiday;
 Till Isis' elders reel, their pupils sport,
 And Alma Mater lie dissolved in Port!
 "Enough! enough! the raptured Monarch cries;
 And through the iv'ry gate the vision flies."

In Book Fourth the goddess occupies her throne. All the rebellious and hostile powers—wit, logic, rhetoric, morality, the muses—lie bound; and diverse votaries of Dullness successively move into presence. The first is OPERA, who puts Handel to flight. Then flow in a crowd of all sorts. A part have been described:—

"Nor absent they, no members of her state,
 Who pay her homage in her sons, the great;

Who false to Phœbus, bow the knee to Beal,
 Or impious, preach his word without a call.
 Patrons, who sneak from living worth to dead,
 Withhold the pension, and set up the head;
 Or vest dull Flattery in the sacred gown,
 Or give from fool to fool the laurel crown;
 And (last and worst) with all the east of wit,
 Without the soul, the Muse's hypocrite.

"There march'd the hard and blockhead side by side,
 Who rhym'd for hire, and patroniz'd for pride.
 Narcissus, prais'd with all a parson's power,
 Look'd a white lily sunk beneath a shower.
 There mov'd Montalto with superior air:
 His stretch'd-out arm display'd a volume fair;
 Courtiers and patriots in two ranks divide,
 Through both he pass'd, and bow'd from side to side;
 But as in graceful act, with awful eye,
 Compos'd he stood, bold Benson thrust him by:
 On two unequal crutches propt he came,
 Milton's on this, on that one Jonson's name.
 The decent Knight retir'd with sober rage,
 Withdrew his hand and clos'd the pompous page:
 But (happy for him as the timea went then)
 Appear'd Apollo's may'r and aldermen,
 On whom three hundred gold-capt youths await.
 To lug the pond'rous volume off in state.

"When Dulness, smiling,—Thus revive the wits!
 But murder first, and mince them all to bits!
 As erst Medea (cruel, so to save!)
 A new edition of old Æson gave;
 Let standard authors thus, like trophies borne,
 Appear more glorious as more hack'd and torn.
 And you, my Critics! in the chequer'd shade,
 Admire new light through holes yourselves have made.

"Leave not a foot of verse, a foot of stone,
 A page, a grave, that they can call their own;
 But spread, my sons, your glory thin or thick,
 On passive paper, or on solid brick.
 So by each bard an alderman shall sit,
 A heavy lord shall hang at ev'ry wit,
 And while on Fame's triumphal car they ride,
 Some slave of mine be pinion'd to their side."

A dreadful figure appears.—THE SCHOOLMASTER. He eulogizes the system of education, which teaches nothing but words and verse-making.

"A hundred head of Aristotle's friends"

pour in from the colleges—Aristarchus (Richard Bentley) at their head. He displays his own merits as a critic, and

extols the system of teaching in the universities; but strides away disgusted on seeing approach a band of young gentlemen returned from their travels on the Continent, and accompanied by their traveling tutors and their mistresses. One of the tutors reports at large to the goddess on the style and advantages of their travels, and presents his own pupil. Where is such another passage to be found in English poetry? It surpasses Cowper's celebrated strain on the same subject.

"In flow'd at once a gay embroider'd race,
And titl'ring push'd the pedants off the place:
Some would have spoken, but the voice was drown'd
By the French horn, or by the op'ning hound.
The first came forwards with as easy mien,
As if he saw St. James's and the Queen.
When thus the attendant Orator begun;
Receive, great Empress! thy accomplish'd son:
Thine from the birth, and sacred from the rod,
A dauntless infant! never scar'd with God.
The sire saw, one by one, his virtues wake;
The mother begg'd the blessing of a rake.
Thou gav'st that ripeness which so soon began,
And ceas'd so soon, he ne'er was boy nor man;
Through school and college thy kind cloud o'ercast,
Safe and unseen the young *Æneas* past;
Thence bursting glorious, all at once let down,
Stunn'd with his giddy 'larum half the town.
Intrepid then, o'er seas and lands he flew;
Europe he saw, and Europe saw him too.
There all thy gifts and graces we display,
Thou, only thou, directing all our way!
To where the *Seiae*, obsequious as she runs,
Pours at great *Bourbon's* feet her silken sons;
Or *Tiber*, now no longer Roman, rolls,
Vain of Italian arts, Italian souls:
To happy convents, bosom'd deep in vines,
Where slumber abbots, purple as their wines;
To isles of fragrance, lily-silver'd vales,
Diffusing languor in the panting gales:
To lands of singing, or of dancing slaves,
Love-whisp'ring woods, and lute-resounding waves.
But chief her shrine where naked *Venus* keeps,
And *Cupids* ride the *Lion* of the deeps;
Where, eas'd of fleets, the *Adriatic* main
Wafts the smooth eunuch and enamour'd swain.
Led by my hand, he saunter'd Europe round,
And gather'd ev'ry vice on Christian ground;
Saw ev'ry court, heard ev'ry king declare
His royal sense, of op'tas or the fair;

The stews and palace equally explor'd,
 Intrigu'd with glory, and with spirit whor'd;
 Tried all *hors d'œuvres*, all *liqueurs* defin'd,
 Judicious drank, and greatly-daring din'd;
 Dropt the dull lumber of the Latin store,
 Spoil'd his own language, and acquir'd no more;
 All classic learning lost on classic ground;
 And last turn'd Air, the echo of a sound!
 See now, half-cur'd, and perfectly well-bred,
 With nothing but a solo in his head;
 As much estate, and principle, and wit,
 As Jansen, Fleetwood, Cibber, shall think fit;
 Stol'n from a duel, follow'd by a nun.
 And, if a borough choose him, not undone;
 See, to my country happy I restore
 This glorious youth, and add one Venus more.
 Her too receive, (for her my soul adores,)
 So may the sons of sons of sons of whores,
 Prop thine, O Empress! like each neighbour throne,
 And make a long posterity thy own.
 Pleas'd she accepts the hero, and the dame
 Wraps in her veil, and frees from sense of shame."

A set of pure idlers appear loitering about. Annius, an antiquary, begs to have them made over to him, to turn into virtuosos. Mummius, another antiquary, quarrels with him, and the goddess reconciles them. The minute naturalists follow "thick as locusts."

"Each with some wondrous gift approach'd the Power,
 A nest, a toad, a fungus, or a flower."

A florist lodges a heavy complaint against an entomologist. The singular beauty of the pleading on both sides has often been noticed, and by the best critics, from Thomas Gray to Thomas De Quincy.

"The first thus open'd: Hear thy suppliant's call,
 Great Queen, and common mother of us all!
 Fair from its humble bed I rear'd this flow'r,
 Suckl'd, and cheer'd with air, and sun and show'r;
 Soft on the paper ruff its leaves I spread,
 Bright with the gilded button tip'd its head.
 Then thron'd in glass, and nam'd it Caroline:
 Each maid cry'd, Charming; and each youth, Divine!
 Did nature's pencil ever blend such rays,
 Such vary'd light in one promiscuous blaze?
 Now prostrate! dead! behold that Caroline:
 No maid cries charming! and no youth divine!
 And lo the wretch! whose vile, whose insect lust
 Laid this gay daughter of the Spring in dust.

Oh punish him, or to th' Elysian shades
Dismiss my soul, where no carnation fades.
He ceas'd, and wept. With innocence of mien,
The accus'd stood forth, and thus address'd the Queen:
"Of all the enamel'd race, whose silvery wing
Waves to the tepid zephyrs of the spring,
Or swims along the fluid atmosphere,
Once brightest shin'd this child of heat and air.
I saw, and started from its vernal bow'r
The rising game, and chas'd from flow'r to flow'r.
It fled, I follow'd; now in hope, now pain;
It stopt, I stopt; it mov'd, I mov'd again.
At last it fixed, 't was on what plant it pleas'd,
And where it fixed, the beauteous bird I seiz'd:
Rose, or carnation, was below my care;
I meddle, Goddess! only in my sphere.
I tell the naked fact without disguise,
And, to excuse it, need but show the prize;
Whose spoils this paper offers to your eye,
Fair ev'n in death! this peerless butterfly."

The mighty mother cannot find it in her heart to pronounce a decision which must aggrrieve one of such a devoted pair. She extols them both, and makes over to their joint care and tuition the *fainéants* aforesaid. The subject leads her into a more serious strain of thinking. There is an evident danger; for the studies which she recommends are studies of nature, and the study of nature tends to rise out of nature. The goddess, accordingly, is strenuous in cautioning her followers to keep within the pale of trifles, and of the sensible. The suggestion of the hazard fires a clerk, a metaphysician, who, on the behalf of the metaphysicians, undertakes for a theology that shall effectually shut out and keep down religion. Gordon, the translator of Tacitus, and publisher of the irreligious "Independent Whig," being mentioned by the orator of the metaphysicians with praise, under the name of Silenus, rises and advances, leading up, apparently, the Young England of the day. He presents them as liberated from priestcraft, and ready for drinking the cup of a "Wizard old," attached to the suite of the goddess. This "Magus" extends to them the cup of self-love,

"Which whoso tastes, forgets his former friends,
Sire, ancestors, HIMSELF."

There is philosophy enough in the last piece of oblivion.

Impudence, pure mild Stupidity, Self-conceit, Interest, the Accomplishment of Singing, under the auspicious smile of

the goddess, take possession, sundrily, of her children; and the two great arts of Gastronomica, scientific Eating and Drinking.

The queen confers her titles and degrees, assisted by the two universities. She then dismisses the assembly with a solemn charge:—

“Then, blessing all, Go, children of my care!
 To *practice* now from *theory* repair.
 All my commands are easy, short, and full;
 My sons! be proud, be selfish, and be dull.
 Guard my prerogative, assert my throne:
 This nod confirms each privilege your own.
 The cap and switch be sacred to his Grace;
 With staff and pumps the Marquis leads the race;
 From stage to stage the licens’d Earl may run,
 Pair’d with his fellow-charioteer, the Sun;
 The learned Baron butterflies design,
 Or draw to silk Arachne’s subtle line;
 The Judge to dance his brother sergeant call!
 The Senator at cricket urge the ball;
 The Bishop stow (pontific luxury!)
 An hundred souls of turkeys in a pie;
 The sturdy Squire to Gallic masters stoop,
 And drown his lands and manors in a soup.
 Others import yet nobler arts from France,
 Teach kings to fiddle, and make senates dance.
 Perhaps more high some daring son may soar,
 Proud to my list to add one monarch more;
 And, nobly conscious, princes are but things
 Born for first ministers, as slaves for kings,
 Tyrant supreme! shall three estates command,
 And make one mighty *Dunciad of the land!*

“More she had spoke, but yawn’d—All Nature nods—
 What mortal can resist the yawn of gods?
 Churches and Chapels instantly it reach’d
 (St. James’s first, for leaden G—— preach’d);
 Then catch’d the Schools; the Hall scarce kept awake;
 The Convocation gap’d, but could not speak:
 Lost was the Nation’s sense, nor could be found,
 While the long solemn unison went round:
 Wide, and more wide, it spread o’er all the realm;
 Ev’n Palinurus nodded at the helm;
 The vapour mild o’er each Committee crept;
 Unfinish’d treaties in each office slept;
 And chiefless Armies doz’d out the campaign;
 And Navies yawn’d for orders on the main.

“O Muse! relate (for you can tell alone,
 Wits have short memories, and dunces none),
 Relate who first, who last, resign’d to rest;
 Whose heads she partly, whose completely blest;

What charms could faction, what ambition lull,
 The venal quiet, and intrance the dull;
 Till drown'd was Sense and Shame, and Right and Wrong—
 O sing, and hush the nations with thy song!

In vain, in vain—the all-composing hour
 Resistless falls; the Muse obeys the pow'r.
 She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
 Of Night primeval, and of Chaos Old!
 Before her fancy's gilded clouds decay,
 And all its varying rainbows die away.
 Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
 As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
 The sick'ning stars fade off the ethereal plain;
 As Argus's eyes, by Hermes' wand oppress'd,
 Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
 Art after Art goes out, and all is night.
 See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
 Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
 Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
 Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
 Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
 And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense!
 See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
 In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave and die.
 Religion, blushing, veils her sacred fires,
 And unawares Morality expires.
 Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
 Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse Divine;
 Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restor'd;
 Light dies before thy uncreating word:
 Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
 And universal Darkness buries All."

Mr. Bowles, himself a true poet, thinks the Fourth Book the best. "The objects of satire," he says, "are more general and just: the one is confined to persons, and those of the most insignificant sort; the other is directed chiefly to things, such as faults of education, false habits, and false taste. In polished and pointed satire, in richness of versification and imagery, and in the happy introduction of characters, speeches, figures, and every sort of poetical ornament adapted to the subject, this Book yields, in my opinion, to none of Pope's writings of the same kind." Excellently well said. But what inconsistency in saying, at the same time, "These observations of Dr. Warton are, in general, very just and sensible." And again, "I by no means *think so meanly* of it as Dr. Warton."

Meanly, indeed! Why, he has just told us he thinks it equal to anything of the same kind Pope ever wrote. But the distinguished Wintonian chose to speak nonsense, rather than speak harshly of old Joe. What are Dr. Warton's "in general very just and sensible observations?" "Our poet was persuaded by Dr. Warburton, unhappily enough, to add a Fourth Book to his finished piece, of such a very different cast and colour as to render it at last one of the most motley compositions there is, perhaps, anywhere to be found in the works of so exact a writer as Pope. For one great purpose of this Fourth Book (where, by the way, the hero does nothing at all) was to satirize and proscribe infidels and free-thinkers, to leave the ludicrous for the serious, Grub Street for theology, the mock-heroic for metaphysics—which occasion a marvellous mixture and jumble of images and sentiments, pantomime and philosophy, journals and moralevidence, Fleet Ditch and the High Priori road, Curl and Clarke." That reads like a bit of a prize-essay by a bachelor of arts in the "College of the Goddess in the City." The *Dunciad* is rendered not only a motley, but, perhaps, the most motley composition of an exact writer, by a Book added to it when it was in a state of perfection—for as a Poem in Three Books, "it was clear, consistent, and of a piece." This is not the way to make a poem motley, nor a man. "Motley's the suit I wear," might have taught the Doctor better. They who don't like the Fourth Book can stop at the end of the Third, and then the Poem is motley no more. It is in a higher strain than the Three, and why not? The goddess had a greater empire than Warton, who was a provincial, had ever dreamt of in his philosophy; but, in Pope's wide imagination, it stood with all its realms. The hero had no more to say or to do—Cibber was banished to Cimmeria for life, to work in the mines—and Dullness had forgotten she ever saw his face.

"Then rose the seed of Chaos, and of Night,
To blot out order, and extinguish light,
Of dull and venal a new world to mould,
And bring Saturnian days of lead and gold."

That long clumsy sentence about "a marvellous mixture and jumble of images and sentiments," &c. &c. &c., is pure nonsense. In itself, the Fourth Book is most harmoniously constructed as a work of art, and it rises out of, and ascends

from the Third, a completed creation. To call that YAWN mock-heroic, would be profane—it is sublime!

“Speaking of the *Dunciad*,” continues the Doctor, “as a work of art, in a critical, not a religious light, I must venture to affirm, that the subject of this Fourth Book was foreign and heterogeneous, and the addition of it is injudicious, ill-placed, and incongruous, as any of those similar images we meet with in Pulci or Ariosto.” The addition of a Fourth Book to a poem, previously consisting of Three, is not an image at all, look at it how you will, and cannot therefore be compared with “any of those dissimilar images we meet with in Pulci or Ariosto.” We much admire Pulci and Ariosto, especially Ariosto, but they and their dissimilar images have no business here; and were Dr. Joseph alive anywhere in the neighbourhood, we should whistle in his ear not to be so ostentatious in displaying his Italian literature, which was too thin to keep out the rain.

“It is,” he keeps stuttering on, “like introducing a crucifix into one of Teniers’s burlesque conversation pieces.” We see no reason why a crucifix should not be in the room of a good Catholic during a burlesque conversation; and Teniers, if he never have, might have painted one in such a piece without offence, had he chosen to do so; but the question we ask, simply is, what did Doctor Joseph Warton mean? Just nothing at all.

“On the whole,” stammereth the Doctor further on, “the chief fault of the *Dunciad* is the violence and vehemence of its satire.” The same fault may be found with vitriolic acid, nay, with Richardson’s Ultimate Result. No doubt, that for many domestic purposes water is preferable—for not a few, milk—and for some, milk and water. But not with that latter amalgam did Hannibal force his way through the Alps.

But, softly—the Doctor compares the violence and vehemence of Pope’s satire—no—not the violence and vehemence, but the height—to water—but to water rare among the liquid elements. “And the excessive height to which it is carried, and which therefore I may compare to that marvelous column of boiling water near Mount Hecla in Iceland, thrown upwards, *above ninety feet*, by the force of subterraneous fire.” And he adds in a note, to please the incredulous, “Sir Joseph Banks, our great philosophical traveler, had the satisfaction of seeing this wonderful phenomenon.”

“What are the impressions,” eloquently asks the inspired

Joseph, "left upon the mind after a perusal of this poem? Contempt, aversion, vexation, and anger. No sentiments that enlarge, ennoble, move, or mend the heart! Insomuch so, that I know a person whose name would be an ornament to these papers, if I were suffered to insert it, who, after reading a book of the *Dunciad*, always soothes himself, as he calls it, by turning to a canto of the *Faery Queene*." There is no denying that satire is apt to excite the emotions the Doctor complains of, and few more strongly than the *Dunciad*. Yet what would it be without them—and what should we be? But other emotions, too, are experienced at some of the games; and some of an exalted kind, by innumerable passages throughout the poem. Were it not so, this would be a saturnine world indeed. Would we had had the name of the wise gentleman, that it might ornament these papers, who so frequently indulged in "contempt, aversion, vexation, and anger" over Pope, that he might soothe himself, as he called it, with Spenser. We wonder if he occasionally left the bosom of the *Faery Queene* for that of the Goddess of Dullness.

"This is not the case with that very delightful poem, *Mac-Flecnoe*, from which Pope has borrowed many hints and images and ideas. But Dryden's poem was the offspring of contempt, and Pope's of indignation; one is full of mirth, and the other of malignity. A vein of pleasantry is uniformly preserved through the whole of *Mac-Flecnoe*, and the piece begins and ends in the same key." That very beautiful and delightful poem, *Mac-Flecnoe*! That very pretty and agreeable waterfall, Niagara! That very elegant and attractive crater of Mount Vesuvius! That very interesting and animated earthquake, vulgarly called the Great Earthquake at Lisbon? Having ourselves spoken of the good-humour of Dryden (some twenty pages back, about the middle of this article), we must not find fault with Warton for saying that a vein of pleasantry is preserved through the whole of *Mac-Flecnoe*; but what thought *Mac-Flecnoe* himself? "Ay, there's the rub." Then what a vein of pleasantry is preserved through the whole of *Og*! So light and delicate is the handling, that you might be charmed into the soft delusion, that you beheld Christopher with his Knout.

"Since the total decay," innocently exclaims this estimable man, "was foretold in the *Dunciad*, how many very excellent pieces of criticism, poetry, history, philosophy and divinity, have appeared in this country, and to what a degree of

perfection has almost every art, either useful or elegant, been carried?" Mr. Bowles—*mirabile dictu*—backs his old schoolmaster against the goddess. "Can it be thought," says the Canon—standing up for the age of Pope himself—"that this period was enlightened by Young, Thomson, Glover, and many whose characters reflected equal lustre on religion, morals, and philosophy? But such is satire, when it is not guided by truth." All this might have been said in fewer words—"LOOK AT BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE." There is not, in the *Dunciad* itself, an instance of such stupidity recorded, as this indignant attribution of blindness to the present, and to the future, "as far off its coming shone," to "the seed of Chaos and old night," by two divines, editors both of the works of Alexander Pope, Esq., in eight (?) and in ten volumes.

Lord Kames, in his *Elements of Criticism*, urges an objection to the opening of the *Dunciad*, which, if sustained, is sufficient to prove the whole poem vicious from beginning to end. "This author (Pope) is guilty of much greater deviation from the rule. Dullness may be imagined a Deity or Idol, to be worshiped by bad writers; but then some sort of disguise is requisite, some bastard virtue must be bestowed, to give this Idol a plausible appearance. Yet, in the *Dunciad*, Dullness, without the least disguise, is made the object of worship. The mind rejects such a fiction as unnatural." Warburton meets this objection with his usual *fiercé* and acumen. "But is there no bastard virtue in the mighty Mother of so numerous an offspring, which she takes care to bring to the ears of kings? Her votaries would, for this single virtue, prefer her influence to Apollo and the Nine Muses. Is there no bastard virtue in the peace of which the poet makes her the author?—'The goddess bade Britannia sleep.' Is she not celebrated for her beauty, another bastard virtue?—'Fate this fair idol gave.' One bastard virtue the poet hath given her; which, with these sort of critics, might make her pass for a wit; and that is, her love of a joke.—'For gentle Dullness ever loved a joke.' Her delight in games and races is another of her bastard virtues, which would captivate her nobler sons, and draw them to her shrine; not to speak of her indulgence to young travelers, whom she accompanies as Minerva did Telemachus. But of all her bastard virtues, her FREE-THINKING, the virtue which she anxiously propagates amongst her followers in the Fourth Book, might, one

would think, have been sufficient to have covered the poet from this censure. But had Mr. Pope drawn her without the least disguise, it had not signified a rush. Disguised or undisguised, the poem had been neither better nor worse, and he has secured it from being rejected as unnatural by ten thousand beauties of nature." This is too Warburtonian—and Lord Kames must be answered after another fashion, by Christopher North.

What would his lordship have? That she should be called by some other more specious name? By that of some quality to which writers and other men do aspire, and under the semblance of which Dullness is actually found to mask itself—as Gravity, Dignity, Solemnity? Why, two losses would thus be incurred. First, the whole mirth of the poem, or the greater part of it, would be gone. Secondly, the comprehensiveness of the present name would be forfeited, and a more partial quality taken.

The vigour and strength of the fiction require exactly what Pope has done—the barefaced acceptance of Dullness as the imperial power. The poet acts, in fact, under a logical necessity. She is really the goddess under whose influence and virtue they, her subjects, live; whose inspiration sustains and governs their actions. But it would be against all manners that a goddess should not be known and worshiped under her own authentic denomination. To cheat her followers out of their worship, by showing herself to them under a diversity of false appearances, would have been unworthy of her divinity.

As to the probability of the fiction, the answer is plain and ready. Nobody asks for probability. Far otherwise. The bravery of the jest is its improbability. There is a wild audacity proper to the burlesque Epos which laughs at conventional rules, and the tame obligations of ordinary poetry. The absurd is one legitimate source of the comic.

For example, are the GAMES probable? Take the reading to sleep—which is purely witty—a thing which the poet does not go out of his way to invent. It lies essentially on the theme, being a literary *ayaw*; and it is indeed only that which is continually done (oh! us miserable!) thrown into poetical shape. But it is perfectly absurd and improbable, done in the manner in which it is represented—not therefore to be blamed, but therefore to be commended with cachinnation while the world endures.

The truth is, that the Dunces are there, not for the business of saying what they think of themselves, or not that alone, but they must say that which we think of them. They must act from motives from which men do not act. They must aspire to be dull, and be proud of their dullness. They must emulate one another's dullness, or they are unfaithful votaries. In short, they are poetically made, and should be so made, to do, consciously and purposely, that which, in real life, they do undesignedly and unawares.

Lord Kames goes wrong—and very far wrong indeed—though Warburton was not the man to set him right—through applying to a composition extravagantly conceived—an epic extravaganza—rules of writing that belong to a sober and guarded species. In a comedy, you make a man play the fool without his knowing that he is one; because that is an imitation of human manners. And if you ironically praise the virtues of a villain, you keep the veil of irony throughout. You do not now and then forget yourself, and call him a villain by that name. But the spirit and rule of the poem here are, that discretion and sobriety are thrown aside. Here is no imitation of manners—no veil. The persons of the poem, under the hand of the poet, are something in the condition of the wicked ghosts who come before the tribunal of the Gnosian Rhadamanthus; and whom he, by the divine power of his judgment-seat, constrains to bear witness against themselves. The poor ghosts do it, knowing that they condemn themselves. Here the mirth of the poet makes the Dull glorify themselves by recounting each misdeed under its proper appellation.

Joseph Warton mistakes the whole matter as much as Lord Kames. "Just criticism," says he, "calls on us also to point out some of the passages that appear exceptionable in the *Dunciad*. Such is the hero's first speech, in which, contrary to all decorum and probability, he addresses the goddess Dullness, without disguising her as a despicable being, and even calls himself fool and blockhead. For a person to be introduced speaking thus of himself, is in truth unnatural and out of character." Would that the Doctor had been alive to be set at ease on this point by our explanations—but he is dead. They would have quieted his mind, too, about the celebrated speech of Aristarchus. "In Book IV," he adds, "is such another breach of truth and decorum,

in making Aristarchus (Bentley) abuse *himself*, and laugh at his *own* labours.

"The mighty scholiast, whose unweary'd pains
Made Horace dull, and humbled Maro's strains,
Turn what they will to verse, their toil is vain,
Critics like me shall make it prose again.
For Attic phrase in Plato let them seek,
I poach in Suidas for unlicens'd Greek.
For thee we dim the eyes, and stuff the head
With all such reading as was never read:
For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
And write about it, Goddess, and about it."

If Bentley has turned Horace and Milton (Warton blunderingly reads Maro) into prose by his emendations (Milton assuredly he has—Pope may be wrong about Horace), he has rendered vast service to the empire of Dullness; and it would be quite unreasonable that he should not claim of the goddess all merited reward and honour, by announcing exactly this achievement. With what face could he pretend to her favour by telling her that he had restored the text of two great poets to its original purity and lustre? She would have ordered him to instant execution or to a perpetual dun-geon.

Finally, how happened it that such perspicacious personages as Lord Kames and Dr. Warton, to say nothing of their hoodwinked followers, should have thus objected to the passages and speeches singled out for condemnation, as if they alone deserved it, without perceiving that the whole poem, from the first line to the last, was, on their principle, liable to the same fatal objection? And what, on their principle, would they have thought, had they ever read it, of *Mac-Flecnoe*?

Pope takes the name of Dullness largely, for the offuscation of heart and head. He said, long before,

"Want of decency is want of *sense*,"

and he now seems to think himself warranted in attributing vices and corruptions to a clouded understanding—so to Dullness. At least, the darkness and weakness of the moral reason came under the protection of the mighty mother—the daughter of Chaos and of Night. She fosters the disorder and the darkness of the soul. Mere bluntness and inertness of intellect, which the name would suggest, he never confines himself to. Of sharp misused power of mind, too, she is

the tutelary goddess. Errors which mind arrives at by too much subtlety, by self-binding activity, serve her purpose and the poet's; and so some names of powerful intellects are included, which, on a question of their merits, indeed, had better been left out. So the science of mathematics, far overstepping, as the poet conceives, the boundary of its legitimate activity—

“Mad Mathesis alone ——
Now running round the circle, finds it square.”

The real foe of Dullness, then, is Truth—not simply wit or genius. The night of mind is all that Dullness labours to produce. Misdirected wit and genius help on this consummation, and therefore deserve her smile—all the more that they are her born enemies, turned traitors to their native cause; and most formidable enemies too, had they remained faithful. Needs must she load them with dignity and emoluments. Trace the thought. The poem begins from the real dull Dunces, and *their* goddess is Dullness, inevitably: nothing can be gainsaid there. This is the central origin. Go on. Pert or lively dunces, who are not real dull, will come in of due course. And from that first foundation the poet may lawfully go on to bring in perverted intelligence and moral vitiation of the soul. Reclining on our swing-chair—and waiting for the devil—with the *Æneid* in the one hand and the *Dunciad* in the other, we have this moment made a remarkable discovery in ancient and in modern classic poetry. Virgil, in his eighth book, tells us that the pious *Æneas*, handling and examining with delight the glorious shield which the Sire of the Forge has fabricated for him, wonders to peruse, storied there in prophetic sculptures, the fates, and exploits, and renown, of his earth-subduing descendants. In one of these fore-shadowing representations—that of the decisive sea-fight off the promontory of Actium—you might believe that, under the similitude of the conflict and victory which delivered the sovereignty of the Roman world into the hand of Augustus, the sly Father of the Fire has willed by hints to prefigure an everlasting war of light and darkness, the irreconcilable hostility of the Wits and dunces, and the sudden interposition of some divine poet, clothed with preternatural power, for the “foul dissipation and forced rout” of the miscreated multitude.

The foe, whose pretensions to the empire of the world are

to be signally defeated, advances to the combat—"ope barbarica"—helped with a confederacy of barbarians. Queen Dullness herself is characteristically described as heartening and harking forward her legions with pure noise.

"*Rexina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro,*"

that is, rather with her father Chaos's drum, or the drum native to the land of Dullness. Either interpretation forcibly marks out the most turbulent and unintellectual of all musical instruments; and we think at once of her mandate on a later day,

"'Tis yours to shake the soul
With thunder rumbling from the mustard-bowl."

The contending powers are presented under a bold allegory.

"*Omnigenumque Deum MONSTRA et LATRATOR Anubis,
Contra NEPTUNUM et Venerem, contraque Minervam,
Tela tenent.*"

Neptune prefigures this island, the confessed ruler of the waves, and the precise spot of the globe vindicated, as we have seen, by two great poets from the reign of Dullness. Venus is here understood in her noblest character, as the Alma Venus of Lucretius's invocation, as the Power of Love and the Beautiful in the Universe. The Goddess of Wisdom speaks for herself. Against them a heterogeneous rabble of monsters direct their artillery, under a dog-headed barking protagonist (what a chosen symbol of an impudent, wide-mouthed, yelping Bayes!) the ring-leader of the Cry of Dunces.

Behold the striking and principal figure of the poet himself, armed and ready to loose from his hand his unerring shafts.

"*Actius hæc cernens arcum intendebat Apollo
Desuper.*"

The poet, impersonated in the patron god of all true poets, is high Virgilian; and the proud station and posture, and the godlike annihilating menace of that "*DESUPER*" is equally picturesque and sublime.

The same verse continued brings out the effect of the god's, or of the poet's interposition, in the instantaneous consternation and utter scattering of the rascal rout.

"*.. Omnis eo terrore Ægyptus et Iadus,
Omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabœi.*"

The entire progeny of barbarism are off, in full precipitation, for a place of refuge, if harbour or haven may be had. Or, as the same inspired bard elsewhere has it—"fugère feræ"—the wild beasts have fled.

The triumph is complete. The panic seizes their imperial mistress herself, who, turning her prow, sweeps with all sails set from the lost battle.

"Ipse videbatur ventis REGINA vocatis
Vela dare et laxos jam jamque immittere funes;
Illam inter cædes, pallentem morte futurâ,
Fecerat Ignipotens undis et Iapyge ferri."

And why is Augustus made Victor? Does not his name stand, to all time, as the emperor of good letters? Is an Augustan age a less precise and potential phrase for a golden age of the arts, than a Saturnian age for the same of the virtues? And why is Antony beaten? Surely because he represents the collective Antony-Lumpkinism of literature. And what has the dear Cleopatra to do in the fight? The meretricious gipsy—the word is Virgil's own—by her illicit attractions and by the dusk grain of her complexion, doubly expresses to the life the foul daughter of Night, whom the Dunces obey and worship.

Vulcan, says Virgil, made the shield, like a god, knowing the future. But here Virgil makes Vulcan. And we have now seen enough fully to justify the later popular tradition of his country in steadfastly attributing to him the fame of an arch-wizard. Looking at the thing in this light, we derive extreme consolation from the final augurous words of our last citation—"pallentem morte futurâ"—which we oppose with confidence to the appalling final prophecy of Pope, and believe that the goddess is, as the nymphs were said to be, exceedingly long-lived, but not immortal.

SUPPLEMENT TO MAC-FLECNÖE AND THE DUNCIAD.

[Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1845.]

WELL, then, we have once more—to wit, a month ago—wheeled round and encountered face to face our two great masters, with whom we at first set out—John Dryden and Alexander Pope. We found them under a peculiar character, that of Avengers—to be imaged by the Pythean quelling with his divine and igneous arrows the Python, foul mud-engendered monster, burthening the earth and loathed by the light of heaven.

Dryden and Pope! Father and son—master and scholar—founder and improver. Who can make up his election, which of the two he prefers?—the free composition of Dryden that streams on and on, full of vigour and splendour, of reason and wit, as if verse were a mother tongue to him, or some special gift of the universal Mother—or the perfected art of Pope? Your choice changes as your own humour or the weathercock turns. If jolly Boreas, the son of the clear sky, as Homer calls him, career scattering the clouds, and stirring up life over all the face of the waters, grown riotous with exuberant power, you are a Drydenite. But if brightness and stillness fall together upon wood and valley, upon hill and lake, then the spirit of beauty possesses you, and you lean your ear towards Pope. For the spirit of beauty reigns in his musical style; and if he sting and kill, it is with an air and grace that quite win and charm the lookers-on; and a sweetness persuades them that he is more concerned about embalming his victims to a perennial pulchritude after death, than intent upon ravishing from them the breath of a short-lived existence.

Dryden is all power—and he knows it. He soars at ease—he sails at ease—he swoops at ease—and he trusses at ease. In his own verse, not another approaches him for

energy brought from familiar uses of expression. Witness the hazardous but inimitable—

“To file and polish God Almighty’s fool,”

and a hundred others. Shakspeare and Milton are now and then (*in blanks*, as Tweedie used to say) all-surpassing by such a happiness. But Dryden alone moves unfettered in the fettering couplet—alone of those who have submitted to the fetters. For those who write distichs, running them into one another, head over heels, till you do not know where to look after the rhyme—these do not wear their fetters, and with an all-mastering grace dance to the chime, but they break them and caper about, the fragments clanking dismally and strangely about their heels. Turn from the clumsy clowns to glorious John:—sinewy, flexible, well-knit, agile, stately-stepping, gracefully-bending, stern, stalwarth—or sitting his horse, “erect and fair,” in careering, and carrying his steel-headed lance of true stuff, level and steady to its aim, and impetuous as a thunderbolt. His strokes are like the shots of that tremendous ordnance—

“chain’d thunderbolts and hail

Of iron globes—

That whom they hit none on their feet might stand;
Though standing else as rocks.”

But we are forgetting ourselves. We must not run into elongated criticism, however excellent, in a SUPPLEMENT— and therefore gladden you all with a specimen—without note or comment—from the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*.

“Doeg, though without knowing how or why,
Made still a blundering kind of melody;
Spurr’d boldly on, and dash’d through thick and thin,
Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in;
Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,
And in one word heroically mad:
He was too warm on picking-work to dwell,
But fagoted his notions as they fell. }
And if they rhymed and rattled, all was well. }
Spiteful he is not, though he wrote a satyr,
For still there goes some thinking to ill nature:
He needs no more than birds and beasts to think,
All his occasions are to eat and drink.
If he call rogue and rascal from a garret,
He means you no more mischief than a parrot:

The words for friend and foe alike were made,
 To fetter them in verse is all his trade.
 For almonds he'll cry whore to his own mother:
 And call young Absalom king David's brother.
 Let him be gallows-free by my consent,
 And nothing suffer since he nothing meant;
 Hanging supposes human soul and reason,
 This animal's below committing treason:
 Shall he be hang'd who never could rebel?
 That's a preferment for Achitophel.
 Railing in other men may be a crime,
 But ought to pass for mere instinct in him:
 Instinct he follows and no further knows,
 For to write verses with him is to transpose.
 'Twere pity treason at his door to lay,
 Who makes heaven's gate a lock to its own key:
 Let him rail on, let his inventive Muse
 Have four-and-twenty letters to abuse,
 Which, if he jumbles to one line of sense,
 Indict him of a capital offence.
 In fire-works give him leave to vent his spight,
 Those are the only serpents he can write;
 The height of his ambition is, we know,
 But to be master of a puppet-show.
 On that one stage his works may yet appear,
 And a month's harvest keeps him all the year.

"Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
 For here's a tun of midnight work to come,
 Og from a treason-tavern rowling home,
 Round as a globe, and liquor'd every chink,
 Goodly and great he sails behind his link;
 With all this bulk there's nothing lost in Og,
 For every inch that is not fool is rogue:
 A monstrous mass of foul corrupted matter,
 As all the devils had spew'd to make the batter.
 When wine has given him courage to blaspheme,
 He curses God, but God before curst him;
 And, if man could have reason, none has more,
 That made his paunch so rich, and him so poor.
 With wealth he was not trusted, for heaven knew
 What 'twas of old to pamper up a Jew;
 To what would he on quail and pheasant swell,
 That ev'n on tripe and carrion could rebel?
 But though heaven made him poor, with reverence speaking,
 He never was a poet of God's making;
 The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
 With this prophetic blessing—Be thou dull:
 Drink, swear, and roar, forbear no new delight
 Fit for thy bulk; do anything but write:
 Thou art of lasting make, like thoughtless men,
 A strong nativity—but for the pen!

Eat opium, mingle arsenic in thy drink,
 Still thou mayst live, avoiding pen and ink.
 I see, I see, 'tis counsel given in vain,
 For treason botcht in rhyme will be thy bane:
 Rhyme is the rock on which thou art to wreck,
 'Tis fatal to thy fame and to thy neck:
 Why should thy metre good King David blast?
 A psalm of his will surely be thy last.
 Dar'st thou presume in verse to meet thy foes,
 Thou whom the penny pamphlet foil'd in prose?
 Doeg, whom God for mankind's mirth has made,
 O'er-tops thy talent in thy very trade;
 Doeg to thee, thy paintings are so coarse,
 A poet is, though he's the poet's horse.
 A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull
 For writing treason, and for writing dull!
 To die for faction is a common evil,
 But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil:
 Had thou the glories of thy king express'd,
 Thy praises had been satyr at the best;
 But thou in clumsy verse, unlickt, unpointed,
 Hast shamefully defyd the Lord's anointed:
 I will not rake the dunghill for thy crimes,
 For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes?
 But of King David's foes be this the doom,
 May all be like the young man Absalom!
 And for my foes, may this their blessing be,
 To talk like Doeg, and to write like thee!"

This is the *ne plus ultra* of personal satire. Yet there are passages of comparable excellence in the *Dunciad*. Aha! what have we here? A contemptuous attack on Pope by—a Yankee Cockney! What a cross! JOHN RUSSELL LOWELL from Massachusetts thus magpie-like chattereth at the Nightingale.

"*Philip*.—You talk about the golden age of Queen Anne. It was a French pinchbeck age.

"*John*.—Stay, not so fast. I like the writers of that period, for the transparency of their style and their freedom from affectation. If I may trust my understanding of your meaning, our modern versifiers have only made the simple discovery, that an appearance of antiquity is the cheapest passport to respect. But the cheapest which we purchase with subservience is too dear. You yourself have no such prejudice against the Augustan age of English literature. I have caught you more than once with the *Tatler* in your hand, and have heard you praising Dryden's prefaces.

"*Philip*.—You and I have very different notions of what

poetry is, and of what its object should be. You may claim for Pope the merit of an envious eye, which could turn the least scratch upon the character of a friend into a fester, of a nimble and adroit fancy, and of an ear so niggardly that it could afford but one invariable cæsura to his verse; but, when you call him poet, you insult the buried majesty of all earth's noblest and choicest spirits. Nature should lead the true poet by the hand, and he has far better things to do than to busy himself in counting the warts upon it, as Pope did. A cup of water from Hippocrene, tasting, as it must, of innocent pastoral sights and sounds, of the bleat of lambs, of the shadows of leaves and flowers that have leaned over it, of the rosy hands of children whose privilege it ever is to paddle in it, of the low words of lovers who have walked by its side in the moonlight, of the tears of the poor Hagars of the world who have drunk from it, would choke a satirist. His thoughts of the country must have a savour of Jack Ketch, and see no beauty but in a hemp field. Poetry is something to make us wiser and better, by continually revealing those types of beauty and truth which God has set in all men's souls; not by picking out the petty faults of our neighbours to make a mock of. Shall that divine instinct, which has in all ages concerned itself only with what is holiest and fairest in life and nature, degrade itself to go about seeking for the scabs and ulcers of the putridest spirits, to grin over with a derision more hideous even than the pitiful quarry it has moused at? Asmodeus's gift, of unroofing the dwellings of his neighbours at will, would be the rarest outfit for a satirist, but it would be of no worth to a poet. To the satirist the mere outward motives of life are enough. Vanity, pride, avarice—these, and the other external vices, are the strings of his unmusical lyre. But the poet need only unroof his own heart. All that makes happiness or misery under every roof of the wide world, whether of palace or hovel, is working also in that narrow yet boundless sphere. On that little stage the great drama of life is acted daily. There the creation, the tempting, and the fall may be seen anew. In that withdrawing-closet, solitude whispers her secrets, and death uncovers his face. There sorrow takes up her abode, to make ready a pillow and a resting-place for the weary head of love, whom the world casts out. To the poet nothing is mean, but everything on earth is a fitting altar to the supreme beauty.

“But I am wandering. As for the poets of Queen Anne's

reign, it is enough to prove what a kennel standard of poetry was then established, that Swift's smutchy verses are not even yet excluded from the collections. What disgusting stuff, too, in Prior and Parnell! Yet Swift, perhaps, was the best writer of English whom that period produced. Witness his prose. Pope treated the English language as the image-man has served the bust of Shakspeare yonder. To rid it of some external soils he has rubbed it down till there is no muscular expression left. It looks very much as his own 'mockery king of snow' must have done after it had begun to melt. Pope is for ever mixing water with the good old mother's milk of our tongue. You cannot get a straightforward speech out of him. A great deal of his poetry is so incased in verbiage, that it puts me in mind of those important-looking packages which boys are fond of sending to their friends. We unfold envelope after envelope, and at last find a couple of cherry-stones. But in Pope we miss the laugh which in the other case follows the culmination of the joke. He makes Homer lisp like the friar in Chaucer, and Ajax and Belinda talk exactly alike.

"John.—Well, we are not discussing the merits of Pope, but of the archaisms which have been introduced into modern poetry. What you say of the Bible has some force in it. The forms of speech used in our version of it will always impress the mind, even if applied to an entirely different subject. What else can you bring forward?

"Philip.—Only the fact, that by going back to the more natural style of the Elizabethan writers, our verse has gained in harmony as well as strength. No matter whether Pope is describing the cane of a fop, or the speech of a demi-god, the pause must always fall on the same syllable, and the sense be chopped off by the same rhyme. Achilles cannot gallop his horses round the walls of Troy, with Hector dragging behind his chariot, except he keep time to the inimitable seesaw of the couplet."

Master Lowell gives tongue with a plagiarism from Southey. In his *Life of Cowper* that great writer somewhat rashly says, "The age of Pope was the golden age of poets—but it was the pinchbeck age of poetry." What is pardonable in Southey is knoutable in his ape. Think of one American Cantab playfully rating and complimenting another on having caught him more than once with the *Tatler* in his hand, and with having heard him praising Dryden's prefaces! What liberality—nay, what universality of taste! Absolutely able, in the

reaches of his transatlantic soul, to relish Dryden's prefaces! But in his appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober, Philip cannot, crop-sick, but nauseate the thought of Pope's being a poet.

The whole dialogue—somewhat of the longest—*tedious* exceedingly—is polluted with similar impudencies. “The strong point in Pope's displays of sentiment, is in the graceful management of a cambric handkerchief. You do not believe a word that Heloise says, and feel all the while that she is squeezing out her tears as if from a half-dry sponge.” Such is the effect of too copious draughts from that Hippocrene which alternately discharges cock-tail and mint-julep. John, however, does not go the whole hog with Philip. He erects his ears to their full length, and brays thus—“*I do not think that you do Pope justice!*” and then does Pope justice as follows: “*His translation of Homer is as bad as it can be, I admit!*” I ADMIT! “But surely you cannot deny the merit of lively and ingenious fancy to his ‘Rape of the Lock,’ nor of knowledge of life, and a certain polished classicalness, to his epistles and satires. His portraits are like those of Copley, of fine gentlemen and ladies, whose silks and satins are the best part of them.” But poor, cautious, timid, trimming, turn-about John cannot so conciliate bully Philip, who squabashes at once both poet and critic.

“*Philip*.—I cannot allow the parallel. In Copley's best pictures, the drapery, though you may almost hear it rustle, is wholly a subordinate matter. Witness some of those in our College-hall here at Cambridge—that of Madam Boylston especially. I remember being once much struck with the remark of a friend, who convinced me of the fact, that Copley avoided the painting of wigs whenever he could, thus getting a step nearer nature. Pope would have made them a prominent object. I grant what you say about the ‘Rape of the Lock,’ but this does not prove that Pope was a poet. If you wish an instance of a *poet's* fancy, look into the ‘Midsummer Night's Dream.’ I can allow that Pope has written what is entertaining, but surely not poetical. Show me a line that makes you love God and your neighbour better, that inclines you to meekness, charity, and forbearance, and I will show you a hundred that make it easier for you to be the odious reverse of all these. In many a Pagan poet there is more Christianity. No poet could write a ‘Dunciad,’ or even read it. You have persuaded yourself into thinking Pope a poet, as, in looking for a long time at a stick which

we believe to be an animal of some kind, we fancy that it is stirring. His letters are amusing, but do not increase one's respect for him. When you speak of his being classical, I am sure that you jest."

The waves of the Atlantic have wafted acorns dropped from the British oak to the Western shores, and a wide and strong grove is growing up there. We feel our kindred with the fellow-beings of our tongue, and rejoice with a natural and keen interest in everything true, great, and good, that is produced within the States. Powers are moving there, that may, that do, want much tempering; but of which, when tempered, we augur high things. One such tempering is reverence of the past, and Pope is one of the great names which England tenders to young America. We augur ill, and are uneasy for our cousins or nephews, when we see them giving themselves airs, and knowing better than their betters. What are we to think, when, instead of the fresh vigour which should rise on the soil of the self-governed, we find repetition, for the worse, of the feeblest criticisms which have disgraced some of our own weaklings? This presumptuous youngling talks technically, and does not know what he is talking about. Pope has *not* but one invariable cæsura to his verse. He has an ordinary range of four places for his cæsura, and the variety and music which he manages to give his verse under that scheme, dictated by a sensitive ear, is truly wonderful. That Pope is only a satirist, and can find nothing in humanity but its faults, infirmities, and disgraces to feed upon with delight, is a shameful falsehood. He is as generous in praise as he is galling in sarcasm; and the voice of Christian Europe has pronounced him a moral and religious poet. It is rather strange to see the stickler for the beauty and exaltation of poetry, diligent in purifying and ennobling the taste of his countrymen, by raking in the dirt for disgusting and loathsome images, to express his slanderous character of a writer, eminent among the best for purity and refinement. We take leave of Mr. Lowell with remarking, that his affected and hyperbolic praises heaped on the old English dramatists are as nauseous as any ignorant exaggeration can be, bombastically protruded on us at second-hand, from an article in an old number of the *Retrospective Review*, from which most of the little he knows is taken, and in the taking, turned into most monstrous nonsense.

Friends of our soul! Permit us, now, in this our Supple-

ment, to suggest to your recollection, that Satire is public or private. Public satire is, or would be, authoritative, robed, magisterial censure. Private satire is private warfare—the worst plague of the state, and the overthrow of all right law. It is worse. For when baron besieges baron, there is high spirit roused, and high deeds are achieved. But private malice in verse is as if the gossiping dames of a tea-table were armed with daggers instead of words, to kill reputations—the School for Scandal turned into a tragedy. We are groaning now over the inferior versifiers. To the Poets, to the mighty ones, we forgave everything, a month ago. We say then, again, that although duly appointed to this Chair of Justice in which we sit, and having our eyes bandaged like the Goddess whose statue is in the corner of the hall, yet our hands are open, and we are willing—as in all well-governed kingdoms judges have been willing—to take bribes. But we, let it be known, we must be bribed high. Juvenal, Persius, Horace, Dryden, and Pope have soothed the itching of our palms to our heart's content; and each has gained his cause in our impartial court. Nay, we are very much afraid, that if that gall-fed, parricidal ruffian, Archilochus, who twisted his verses into a halter for noosing up his wife's father—a melancholy event to which the old gentleman, it is said, lent a helping hand—were more to us than a tradition, we should be in danger of finding, in the poignancy of his iambics, a sauce too much to our relish. *Avec cette sauce*—cried the French gastronome, by the ecstasy of his palate bewitched out of his moral discretion—*Avec cette sauce on mangeraît son père!*

But leaving these imaginative heights, and walking along the level ground of daily life, common sense, and sane criticism, we go on to assert that private satire, lower than the highest, is intolerable. The grandeur of moral indignation in Juvenal never is altogether without a secret inkling of disquietude at the bottom of the breast. It may be the Muse's legitimate and imposed office to smite the offending city; but it is never her joyous task. The judge never gladly puts on the black cap. The reality oppresses us—we are sore and sick in the very breath of the contagion, even if we escape untainted by it. The power of poetry possesses us for the time, and we must submit. Perhaps it is right, if the Muse be a great *magistra vitæ*, that she should present life under all its aspects, and school us in all its disciplines; and the

direct, real, official censure of manners may be a necessary part of her calling. But how differently does the indirect censure affect us! Shakspeare creating Iago, censures wily, treacherous, envious, malignant, cold-blooded villany, where and whensoever to be found. He does not fix the brand upon the forehead of a time, or of a profession, or of a man, or of a woman; but of a devil who is incarnate in every time, who exercises every profession, is an inmate, is the householder, rather, now in the steeled breast of a man, and now in woman's softest bosom. This ubiquitous possibility of the Mark's occurring—the ignorance of the archer where his gifted arrow will strike—ennobles, aggrandizes his person and his work. It does not weaken the service which the poet is called upon to render to humanity, by showing himself the foe of her foes. And we, the spectators of the drama—what is that strangely balanced and harmonized conflict of emotions, by means of which we at once loathe and endure the poisonous confidant of the Moor? From the depths of the heart abhorring the odious, execrable man, whilst our fancy hovers, fascinated, about the marvelous creation! Yet we do not call Shakspeare here a Satirist. The distinction is broad. The Satirist is, in the most confined, or in the most comprehensive sense

—PERSONAL.

And now we doubt not, readers beloved, that while you have been enjoying these our reflections on Satire, you may likewise have been dimly foreseeing the purposed end towards which our drift is setting in, as on a strong tide. We have been dealing with first-raters. In them the power of the poetry reconciles us to the matter—mitigates the repugnancy otherwise ready to wait, in a well-constituted mind, upon a series of thoughts and images which studiously persevere in venting the passions of hate and scorn. The curse of the Muse on all middling poets—and upon Parnassus one is tempted to ascribe to the middle zone of the mountain, all those who do not cluster about one of the summits—the common curse seems to fall with tenfold violence upon the middling Satirist. The great poet has authority, magistracy, masterdom, seated in his high spirit; and when he chooses to put forth his power, we bow before him, or stoop our heads from the descending bolt. But if one not thus privileged leap uncalled into the awful throne, to hurl self-dictated judgments, this arrogant usurpation of supremacy justly offends and revolts us. For he who censures the age, or any notable

division of cotemporary society, in verse, does in fact arrogate to himself an unappealable superiority. He speaks, or affects to speak, muse-inspired, as a prophet, oracularly. He does not inquire, he thunders. Now, the thunder of a scold is anything but agreeable—and we exclaim—

*Demens! qui nimbos et non imitabile fulmen
Ære et cornipedum cursu simulâtrat equorum."

Poets are the givers of renown. Their word is fame. But fame is good and ill; and therefore they speak Eulogy and Satire. They are the tongues of the world. The music of verse makes way for Lear's words to all our hearts. It makes way for the Satirist's to the heart, where they are to be mortal. If mankind justly moved condemn, the Poet will find voice for that condemnation. Wo be to those who by goading provoke him, who is the organ of the universal voice, to visit his own wrong, to wreak his own vengeance on their heads! The wrong, the wrath is private; but the voice retains its universality, and they are withered as if by the blast of the general hate or scorn:—

"He was not for an age, but for all time,"

said one poet of another. There are two ways of belonging to one's age. You are born of it—you die with it. Johnson disclaims for Shakspeare the co-etaneousness by birth and by death. He is the son of all time; and the inheritor of all time. His mind is the mind of ages deceased, and of ages unborn; and his writings remain to each succeeding generation, as fresh as if it had witnessed their springing into existence. They take no date.

Something of this is common to all essential poetry—

"Vivuntque commissi calores
Æoliæ fidibus puellæ."

The loves of Sappho live. They have not passed away. They are immortally. Therefore the Poet, as we said, is the giver of fame. His praise—his scorn—lives for ever.

All who are worthy to read Us know how well the rude primeval people comprehended the worth of the poet. The song rang to the borders of the land or of the name, and that was glory or ignominy alive in every heart. Honour given by the poet was then a substantial possession; to be disgraced by his biting vituperation was like the infliction of a legal punishment. The whole condition of things—men's minds

and their outward relations—corresponded to that which seems now to us an extraordinary procedure—that of constituting the poet, in virtue of that name, a state functionary, holding office, rank, and power. Now, the poet is but a self-constituted Censor. He holds office from the Muse only; or upon occasion from the mighty mother, Dullness. The Laureateship is the only office in the State of Poetry that is in the Queen's gift; and that, thanks to her benignity and the good sense of the nineteenth century, has become a sinecure conferred on an Emeritus.

"Hollo! my fancy, whether dost thou roam!"

Nay, she is not roaming at all—for we have been all along steering in the wind's eye right to a given point. We come now to say a few words of CHARLES CHURCHILL.

Of him it was said by one greater far, that he "blazed the meteor of a season." For four years—during life—his popularity—in London and the suburbs—was prodigious; for forty—and that is a long time after death—he was a choice classic in the libraries of aging or aged men of wit upon town; and now, that nearly a century has elapsed since he "from his horrid hair shook pestilence and war" o'er slaves and Scotsmen, tools and tyrants, peers, poetasters, priests, pimps, and players, his name is still something more than a mere dissyllable, and seems the shadow of the sound that Mother Dullness was wont to whisper in her children's ears when fretting wakefully on her neglected breasts. The Satirist, of all poets, calls the inquiry of the world upon himself. The Censor of manners should in his own be irreproachable. The satirists of a nation should feel that in that respect in which he censures he is whole and sound; that in assailing others he stands upon a rock; that his arrows cannot by a light shifting of the wind return to his own bosom. It was not so with Churchill. But he had his virtues—and he died young.

"Life to the last enjoy'd!! here Churchill lies."

It is not of his life but his writings we purpose to speak. It is not to be thought that his reputation, at the time, and among some high critics since, could be groundless. There is an air of power in his way of attacking any and every subject. He goes to work without embarrassment, with spirit and ease, and is presently in his matter, or in some matter, rarely inane. It is a part, and a high part of genius,

to design; but he was destitute of invention. The self-dubbed champion of liberty and letters, he labours ostentatiously and energetically in that vocation; and in the midst of tumultuous applause, ringing round a career of almost uninterrupted success, he seldom or never seems aware that the duties he had engaged himself to perform—to his country and his kind—were far beyond his endowments—above his conception. His knowledge either of books or men was narrow and superficial. In no sense had he ever been a student. His best thoughts are all essentially common-place; but, in uttering them, there are almost always a determined plainness of words, a free step in verse, a certain boldness and skill in evading the trammel of the rhyme, deserving high praise; while often, as if spurning the style which yet does not desert him, he wears it clinging about him with a sort of disregarded grace.

The Rosciad—The Apology—Night—The Prophecy of Famine—An Epistle to William Hogarth—The Duellist—Gotham—The Author—The Conference—The Ghost—The Candidate—The Farewell—The Times—The Journey—Fragment of a Dedication—such is the list of *Works*, whereof all England rung from side to side—during the few noisy years he vapoured—as in the form of shilling or half-crown pamphlets they frightened the town from its propriety; and gave monthly or quarterly assurance to a great people that they possessed a great living Poet, worthy of being numbered with their mightiest dead.

He began with the Play-house.

The Theatre! Satire belongs to the day, and the theatre belongs to the day. They seem well met. The spirit of both is the same—intense popularity. Actors are human beings placed in an extraordinary relation to other human beings; public characters; but brought the nearer to us by being so—the good ones intimate with our bosoms, dear as friends. Their persons, features, look, gait, gesture, familiar to our thoughts, vividly engraven. They address themselves to every one of us personally, in tones that thrill and chill, or that convulse us with merriment—and all for pleasure! They ask our sympathy, but they task it not. No burthen of distress that they may lay upon us do we desire to rid off our hearts. We only call for more, more! They stir up the soul within us, as nothing else in which, personally, we are quite unconcerned, does. Therefore the praise or sar-

casualty that visits them, comes home to the privacy of our own feelings. Besides, they belong to the service of the Muse; and so the other servant of the Muse, the Satirist, as the superintendent of the household, may reasonably reprehend or commend them. Further, they offer themselves to favour and to disfavour, to praise, to dispraise; to the applauding hands or to the exploding hisses of the public. There is, then, an attraction of fame-bestowing verse towards the stage. And yet does it not seem a pity that the unfortunate bad actors should "bide the pelting of *this* pitiless storm," over and above that of others they are liable to be assailed with? What great-minded Satirist could step down a play-bill from the first rank of performers to the second and the third—hunting out miserable mediocrities—dragging away the culprits of the stage to flagellation and the pillory? Say then, at once, that the Satirist is not great-minded, and his motives are not pure desires for the general benefit. He is by the gift of nature witty, and rather ill-natured. He very much enjoys his own wit, and he hopes that you have fun enough in you to enjoy his jests, and so he breaks them. THE ROSCIAD is, we believe, by far the best of Churchill's performances; very clever, indeed, and characteristic; at the head of all theatrical criticism in verse; yet an achievement, in spite of the talent and ingenuity it displays, not now perusable without an accompanying feeling akin to contempt.

"GOTHAM" is an irregular, poetical whim, of which it is easier to describe the procedure than to assign the reasonable purpose. Gotham itself is a country unknown to our geographers, which Churchill has discovered, and of which, in right of that discovery, he assumes the sovereignty under his own undisguised name, King Churchill. After spiritedly arraiguing the exercise in the real world of that right by which he rules in his imaginary kingdom—a right which establishes the civilized in the lands of the enslaved or expatriated uncivilized, he spends the rest of his first canto in summoning all creatures, rational and irrational, to join the happy Gothamites in the universal choral celebration of his mounting the throne. The second canto, for some two hundred verses, insists upon the necessity of marrying Sense with Art, to produce good writing, and Learning and Humanity, to produce useful writing; and then turns off bitterly to characterize the reigns in succession of the Stuarts, by way of warning to his Gothamites against the temptation to admit

a vagrant Stuart for their king. The third canto delivers the rules by which he, King Churchill, who purposes being the father of his people, designs to govern his own reign. That is all. What and where is Gotham? What is the meaning of this royalty with which the poet invests himself? What are the drift, scope, and unity of the poem? Gotham is not, and is, England. It is not England, for he tells us in the poem that he is born in England, and that he is not born in Gotham; besides which, he expressly distinguishes the two countries by admonishing the Gothamites to search "England's fair records," for the sake of imbibing a due hatred for the House of Stuart. It is England, for it is an island which "Freedom's pile by ancient wisdom raised, adorns," making it great and glorious, feared abroad and happy at home, secure from force or fraud. Moreover, her merchants are princes. The conclusion is, that Gotham is England herself, poetically disidentified by a very thin and transparent disguise. The sovereignty of King Churchill, if it mean anything capable of being said in prose, may shadow the influence and authority which a single mind, assuming to itself an inborn call to ascendancy, wishes and hopes to possess over the intelligence of its own compatriot nation; and this may be conjectured in a writer who principally dedicates himself to the championship of political principles. The rules, in the Third Book, for the conduct of a prince, afford the opportunity of describing the idea of a patriot king, of censuring that which is actually done adversely to these rules; and at the same time, they acquire something of a peculiar meaning, if they are to be construed as a scheme of right political thinking—the intelligence of the general welfare which is obligatory upon the political ruler being equally so upon the political teacher. If this kind of deliberate, allegorical design may be mercifully supposed, the wild self-imagination, and apparently downright nonsense of the First Book, may pretend a palliation of its glaring vanity and absurdity; since the blissful reign of King Churchill over Gotham, which is extolled very much like the "Jovis incrementum," in Virgil's fourth Eclogue, thus comes to mean, when translated into the language of men, the reign in England of the opinions for which Churchill battles in rhyme. Or, this may be too much attribution of plan to a caprice that meant little or nothing. The First Book was published by itself, and may have aimed at something to which the author

found that he could not give shape and consistency. Yet Cowper declares Gotham to be a noble and beautiful poem.

THE AUTHOR might almost seem intended for a sequel to MacFlecnöe and the Dunciad. Not that it assumes, like them, a fanciful vehicle for the satire, but it undertakes the lashing of peccant authors, and recognizes DULLNESS as an enthroned power to whose empire the writer is hostile; and where he adverts to his own early life, and clerical destination, he mentions her as the patroness upon whom his friends had relied for his future church preferment.

"But now, when Dullness rears aloft her throne,
When lordly vassals her wide empire own;
When Wit, seduced by Envy, starts aside,
And basely leagues with Ignorance and Pride, &c.

* * * * *
"Bred to the church, and for the gown decreed,
Ere it was known that I should learn to read;
Though that was nothing for my friends, who knew
What mighty Dullness of itself could do,
Never designed me for a working priest,
But hoped I should have been a dean at least," &c.

The writers more formally and regularly attacked, are Smollett, Murphy, Shebbeare, Guthrie, and one Kidgell, who contrived to earn shame, in exposing to shame the printed but unpublished obscenity and blasphemy of Wilkes. Johnson gets a good word as a state-pensioner, Francis, the translator of Horace, for dullness apparently, and Mason, and even Gray, are signalized, *en passant*, as artificial rhymesters? The general tenour of the poem complains that in these days true learning, genius, and honesty of authorship are of no account; whilst the political profligacy of the pen ensures favour and pay. The first hundred lines forcibly express the inspiring indignation proper to the subject, and some of them are still occasionally quoted; but how inferior all to corresponding strains in Dryden and Pope! They were poets indeed—he was not a poet. He has not fancy or imagination—they had both—they were consummate masters in their art: he was but a bold bungler after all. In proof, take the best passage in THE AUTHOR.

"Is this—O death to think!—is this the land
Where merit and reward went hand in hand?
Where heroes, parent-like, the poet view'd,
By whom they saw their glorious deeds renewed?

Where poets, true to honour, tuned their lays,
 And by their patrons sanctified their praise?
 Is this the land where, on our Spenser's tongue,
 Enamoured of his voice, Description hung?
 Where Jonson rigid Gravity beguiled,
 While Reason through her critic fences smiled?
 Where Nature, listening, stood whilst Shakspeare play'd,
 And wondered at the work herself had made?
 Is this the land where, mindful of her charge,
 And office high, fair Freedom walk'd at large?
 Where, finding in our laws a sure defence,
 She mock'd at all restraints, but those of sense?
 Where, Health and Honour trooping by her side,
 She spreads her sacred empire far and wide;
 Pointed the way, Affliction to beguile,
 And bade the face of Sorrow wear a smile—
 Bade those who dare obey the generous call
 Enjoy her blessings, which God meant for all?
 Is this the land where, in some tyrant's reign,
 When a weak, wicked, ministerial train,
 The tools of power, the slaves of interest, planned
 Their country's ruin, and with bribes unmann'd
 Those wretches, who ordain'd in Freedom's cause,
 Gave up our liberties, and sold our laws;
 When Power was taught by Meanness where to go,
 Nor dared to love the virtue of a foe;
 When, like a lep'rous plague, from the foul head
 To the foul heart her sores Corruption spread,
 Her iron arm when stern Oppression rear'd,
 And Virtue, from her broad base shaken, fear'd
 The scourge of Vice; when, impotent and vain,
 Poor Freedom bow'd the neck to Slavery's chain?
 Is this the land, where, in those worst of times,
 The hardy poet raised his honest rhymes
 To dread rebuke, and bade Controlment speak
 In guilty blushes on the villain's cheek;
 Bade Power turn pale, kept mighty rogues in awe,
 And made them fear the Muse, who fear'd not law?

"How do I laugh, when men of narrow souls,
 Whom folly guides, and prejudice controls;
 Who, one dull drowsy track of business trod,
 Worship their Mammon and neglect their God;
 Who, breathing by one musty set of rules,
 Dote from their birth, and are by system fools;
 Who, form'd to dullness from their very youth,
 Lies of the day prefer to Gospel-truth:
 Pick up their little knowledge from Reviews,
 And lay out all their stock of faith in news;
 How do I laugh, when creatures form'd like these,
 Whom Reason scorns, and I should blush to please,

Rail at all liberal arts, deem verse a crime,
And hold not truth as truth, if told in rhyme!"

These are commendable verses, but they are not the verses of a true poet. For instance, when he will praise the greatest poets—

"Is this the land, where, on our Spenser's *tongue*,
Enamour'd of his *voice*, Description hung"—

the intention is good, and there is some love in the singling out of the name; but Description is almost the lowest, not the highest praise of Spenser. The language too is mean and trite, not that of one who is "*inflammatus amore*" of the sacred poet whom he praises. How differently does Lucretius praise Epicurus! The words blaze as he names him. How differently does Pope or Gray praise Dryden! Even in Churchill's few words there is the awkward and heavy tautology—*tongue* and *voice*. It is more like the tribute of duty than sensibility. The well-known distich on Shakspeare is rather good—it utters with a vigorous turn the general sentiment, the nation's wonder of its own idol. But compare Gray, who also brings Nature and Shakspeare together; or see him speaking of Dryden or Milton, and you see how a poet speaks of a poet—thrilled with recollections—reflecting, not merely commemorating, the power. Indeed, we design to have a few (perhaps twenty) articles entitled Poets on Poets—in which we shall collect chronologically the praises of the brotherhood by the brotherhood. In the mean time we do believe that the one main thing which you miss in Churchill is the true poetical touch and temper of the spirit. He is, as far as he succeeds, a sort of inferior Junius in verse—sinewy, keen—with a good, ready use of strong, plain English; but he has no rapture. His fire is volcanic, not solar. Yet no light praise it is, that he rejects frivolous ornament, and trusts to the strength of the thought, and of the good or ill within. But besides the disparity—which is great—of strength, of intellectual rank—this draws an insuperable difference in kind between him and Pope or Dryden, that they are essentially poets. The gift of song is on their lips. If they turn Satirists, they bring the power to another than its wonted and native vocation. But Churchill obtains the power only in satirizing. As Iago says—

"For I am nothing if not critical."

Is this merely a repetition of Juvenal's "*facit indignatio versus*," rendered in prose, "Indignation makes *me* a poet," who am not a poet by nature? In the first place, Juvenal prodigiously transcends Churchill in intellectual strength; and in the second, Juvenal has far more of essential poetry, although hidden in just vituperation, and in the imposed worldliness of his matter. But we must pull up.

The so-called "EPISTLE TO HOGARTH" is, after the wont of Churchill, a shapeless, undigested performance. It is nothing in the likeness of an epistle; but for three hundred lines a wandering, lumbering rhapsody, addressed to nobody, which, after abusing right and left, suddenly turns to Hogarth, whom it introduces by summoning him to stand forth at the bar in the Court of Conscience, an exemplar of iniquities worse than could have been believed of humanity, were he not there to sustain the character, and authenticate the rightful delineation. Thenceforwards obstreperously railing on, overwhelming the great painter with exaggerated reproaches for envy that persecuted all worth, for untired self-laudation, for painting his unfortunate *Sigismunda*; and oh! shame of song! for the advancing infirmities of old age. The merits of Hogarth, as a master of comic painting, are acknowledged in lines that have been often quoted, and are of very moderate merit—not worth a rush. "The description of his age and affirmities," as Garrick said at the time, "is too shocking and barbarous." It nauseates the soul; and unmasks in the Satirist the rancorous and malignant hostility which assumes the disguise of a righteous indignation.

"Hogarth! stand forth.—Nay, hang not thus aloof—
Now, Candor! now thou shalt receive such proof,
Such damning proof, that henceforth thou shalt fear
To tax my wrath, and own my conduct clear—
Hogarth! stand forth—I dare thee to be try'd
In that great court where Conscience must preside;
At that most solemn bar hold up thy hand;
Think before whom, on what account, you stand—
Speak, but consider well—from first to last
Review thy life, weigh ev'ry action past—
Nay, you shall have no reason to complain—
Take longer time, and view them o'er again—
Canst thou remember from thy earliest youth,
And, as thy God must judge thee, speak the truth,
A single instance where, self laid aside,
And justice taking place of fear and pride,

Thou with an equal eye did'st genius view,
 And give to merit what was merit's due?
 Genius and merit are a sure offence,
 And thy soul sickens at the name of sense.
 Is any one so foolish to succeed?
 On Envy's altar he is doom'd to bleed;
 Hogarth, a guilty pleasure in his eyes,
 The place of executioner supplies:
 See how he glotes, enjoys the sacred feast,
 And proves himself by cruelty a priest.

"Whilst the weak artist, to thy whims a slave,
 Would bury all those pow'rs which Nature gave;
 Would suffer black concealment to obscure
 Those rays thy jealousy could not endure;
 To feed thy vanity would rust unknown,
 And to secure thy credit blast his own,
 In Hogarth he was sure to find a friend
 He could not fear, and therefore might commend:
 But when his spirit, rous'd by honest shame,
 Shook off that lethargy, and soar'd to fame;
 When, with the pride of man, resolv'd and strong,
 He scorn'd those fears which did his honour wrong,
 And, on himself determin'd to rely,
 Brought forth his labours to the public eye,
 No friend in thee could such a rebel know;
 He had desert, and Hogarth was his foe.

"Souls of a tim'rous cast, of petty name
 In Envy's court, not yet quite dead to shame,
 May some remorse, some qualms of conscience feel
 And suffer honour to abate their zeal;
 But the man truly and completely great
 Allows no rule of action but his hate;
 Thro' ev'ry bar he bravely breaks his way,
 Passion his principle, and parts his prey.
 Mediums in vice and virtue speak a mind
 Within the pale of temperance confin'd;
 The daring spirit scorns her narrow schemes,
 And, good or bad, is always in extremes.

"Man's practice duly weigh'd thro' ev'ry age
 On the same plan hath Envy form'd her rage,
 'Gainst those whom fortune hath our rivals made,
 In way of science and in way of trade:
 Stung with mean jealousy she arms her spite,
 First works, then views their ruin with delight.
 Our Hogarth here a grand improver shines,
 And nobly on the gen'ral plan refines:
 He like himself o'erleaps the servile bound;
 Worth is his mark, wherever worth is found;
 Should painters only his vast wrath suffice?
 Genius in ev'ry walk is lawful prize:

'Tis a gross insult to his o'ergrown state;
His love to merit is to feel his hate.

"When Wilkes, our countryman, our common friend,
Arose, his king, his country, to defend;
When tools of pow'r he bar'd to public view,
And from their holes the sneaking cowards drew;
When Rancour found it far beyond her reach
To soil his honour and his truth impeach;
What could induce thee, at a time and place
Where manly foes had blush'd to show their face,
To make that effort which must damn thy name,
And sink thee deep, deep, in thy grave with shame?
Did virtue move thee? No; 'twas pride, rank pride,
And if thou had'st not done it thou had'st dy'd.
Malice (who, disappointed of her end,
Whether to work the bane of foe or friend,
Preys on herself, and driven to the stake,
Gives virtue that revenge she scorns to take)
Had kill'd thee, tott'ring on life's utmost verge,
Had Wilkes and Liberty escap'd thy scourge.

"When that Great Charter, which our fathers bought
With their best blood, was into question brought;
When, big with ruin, o'er each English head
Vile slav'ry hung suspended by a thread;
When Liberty, all trembling and aghast,
Fear'd for the future, knowing what was past;
When ev'ry breast was chill'd with deep despair,
Till reason pointed out that Pratt was there;
Lurking most ruffian-like behind a screen,
So plac'd all things to see, himself unseen,
Virtue, with due contempt, saw Hogarth stand,
The murd'rous pencil in his palsied hand.
What was the cause of Liberty to him,
Or what was Honour! let them sink or swim,
So he may gratify without control
The mean resentment of his selfish soul;
Let freedom perish, if, to freedom true,
In the same ruin Wilkes may perish too.

"With all the symptoms of assur'd decay,
With age and sickness pinch'd and worn away,
Pale, quiv'ring lips, lank cheeks, and faltering tongue,
The spirits out of tune, the nerves unstrung,
The body shrivell'd up, thy dim eyes sunk
Within their sockets deep, thy weak hams shrunk,
The body's weight unable to sustain,
The stream of life scarce trembling thro' the vein,
More than half-kill'd by honest truths, which fell
Thro' thy own fault from men who wish'd thee well,
Canst thou, ev'n thus, thy thoughts to vengeance give,
And, dead to all things else, to malice live!

Hence, Dotard ! to thy closet ; shut thee in ;
 By deep repentance wash away thy sin ;
 From haunts of men to shame and sorrow fly,
 And, on the verge of death, learn how to die."

What was Hogarth's unpardonable sin? Nature had lodged the unlovely soul of Jack Wilkes in an unlovely and ludicrous person, which the wicked and inimitable pencil of Hogarth had made a little unlovelier perhaps, and a little more ludicrous. Horace Walpole spoke in his usual clear-cutting style of Mr. Charles Pylades and Mr. John Orestes. They liked one another, and ran the scent, strong as a trail of rancid fish-guts, of the same pleasures—but let not such hunting in couples profane the name of friendship.

"For me, who warm and zealous for my friend,
 In spite of railing thousands, will commend,
 And, no less warm and zealous 'gainst my foes,
 Spite of commending thousands, will oppose—
 I dare thy worst, with scorn behold thy rage ;
 But with an eye of pity view thy age—
 Thy feeble age ! in which, as in a glass,
 We see how men to dissolution pass.
 Thou wretched being ! whom, on reason's plan,
 So chang'd, so lost, I cannot call a man—
 What could persuade thee at this time of life,
 To launch afresh into the sea of strife !
 Better for thee, scarce crawling on the earth,
 Almost as much a child as at thy birth,
 To have resign'd in peace thy parting breath,
 And sunk unnotic'd in the arms of death.
 Why would thy gray, gray hairs resentment brave,
 Thus to go down with sorrow to the grave ?
 Now, by my soul ! it makes me blush to know
 My spirit could descend to such a foe :
 Whatever cause the vengeance might provoke,
 It seems rank cowardice to give the stroke.

"Sure 't is a curse which angry Fates impose
 To mortify man's arrogance, that those
 Who 're fashion'd of some better sort of clay
 Much sooner than the common herd decay.
 What bitter pangs must humble Genius feel
 In their last hours, to view a Swift and Steele !
 How must ill-boding horrors fill her breast,
 When she beholds men mark'd above the rest
 For qualities most dear, plung'd from that height,
 And sunk, deep sunk, in second childhood's night !
 Are men, indeed, such things ? and are the best
 More subject to this evil than the rest ;

To drivel out whole years of idiot breath,
 And sit the monuments of living Death!
 O! galling circumstance to human pride!
 Abasing thought! but not to be denied.
 With curious art the brain, too finely wrought,
 Preys on herself, and is destroyed by thought.
 Constant attention wears the active mind,
 Blots out her pow'rs, and leaves a blank behind.
 But let not youth, to insolence ally'd,
 In heat of blood, in full career of pride,
 Possess'd of genius, with unhallow'd rage
 Mock the infirmities of rev'rend age:
 The greatest genius to this fate may bow;
 Reynolds in time may be like Hogarth now."

One makes allowance, in reading, for the inflamed temper of the times, for a judgment disturbed with personal anger, and for the self-consciousness which, hardly separable from talent, stirs and sustains its energies. But Churchill demolishing Hogarth! It is startling—rather melancholy—and very amusing. One compares fame with fame—the transitory and the imperishable. The wave, lashed into fury, that comes on, mountain-swollen, all rage, and froth, and thunder, to dash itself into spray against some Atlas of the Deep—some huge brother of Time, whose cheeks the wings of the centuries caress, and of whose hand storms that distract heaven and earth are but toys.

Of the "PROPHECY OF FAMINE," Wilkes, before its publication, said he "was sure it would take, as it was at once personal, poetical, and political." And take it did—going off in thousands and tens of thousands. The Whig coteries, of course, cried it up to the skies; and the established authorities declared that Pope must now hide his diminished head. Such nonsense Churchill swallowed; for he had tried to take it into his head that Pope was a fool to him, and in his cups was wont to vent a wish that little Alec were alive that he might break his heart. That was the delusion of delirium. Inflated with vanity as he was, he must, when sober, have known well he could not with his cudgel, readily though he flourished it, have lived for five minutes before that Master of the rapier.

Scotsmen as we are to the spine, it is possible that we may be incapacitated by the strength of our backbone for perceiving the mighty merit of this astonishing satire. Steeped to the lips in national prejudices in favour of Scotland (not

against England—heaven forbid!) imbibed with the first gulp of Glenlivet that more than three-quarters of a century ago went gurgling down our filial throats—inured to hunger from our tenderest years—"in life's morning march when our spirits were young," ignorant of shoes, though happily not inexpert of sulphur—to us, thus born and thus bred, it may not be given to behold with our outward eyes, and feel with our inward hearts, the full glory of "The Prophecy of Famine." Boswell, with an uneasy smirk, rather than a ghastly grin, said, "It is indeed falsely applied to Scotland, but may on that account be allowed a greater share of invention." Johnson in his heart loved Scotland, as all his jeers show; and perhaps on that account was, like ourselves, no fair judge of Churchill's genius. "I called the fellow a blockhead at first—and I call him a blockhead still," comprehended all his performances in one general contempt. In later times, Jeffrey has dismissed him with little ceremony to find his place at the Third Table. Campbell, who, though a Whig, cared nothing about Churchill, acknowledges having been amused by the laughable extravagance of the "Prophecy." And Lord Mahon says, "that it may yet be read with all the admiration which the most vigorous powers of verse and the most lively touches of wit can earn in the cause of slander and falsehood."

Suppose, rough-and-ready Readers, that you judge for yourselves. You have not a copy of Churchill—so passing over the first part of the poem—about three hundred lines—as dull as ditchwater in the season of powheads—let us give you the cream, or marrow, or pith of the famous "Prophecy of Famine," before which Scotia, "our auld respectit mither," bowed down and fell, and was thought by some to have given up the ghost, or at "least tined her dam."

"Two boys, whose birth, beyond all question, springs
From great and glorious tho' forgotten kings.
Shepherds of Scottish lineage, born and bred
On the same bleak and barren mountain's head;
By niggard Nature doom'd on the same rocks
To spin out life, and starve themselves and flocks;
Fresh as the morning which, enrob'd in mist,
The mountain's top with usual dulness kiss'd,
Jockey and Sawney, to their labours rose;
Soon clad I ween where Nature needs no clothes,
Where, from their youth inur'd to winter-skies,
Dress and her vain refinements they despise.

"Jockey, whose manly high-bon'd cheeks to crown,
 With freckles spotted flam'd the golden down,
 With meikle art could on the bagpipes play,
 Ev'n from the rising to the setting day:
 Sawney as long without remorse could bawl
 Home's madrigals, and ditties from Fingal:
 Oft at his strains, all natural tho' rude,
 The Highland lass forgot her want of food;
 And whilst she scratch'd her lover into rest,
 Sunk pleas'd, tho' hungry, on her Sawney's breast.

"Far as the eye could reach no tree was seen,
 Earth, clad in russet, scorn'd the lively green:
 The plague of locusts they secure defy,
 For in three hours a grasshopper must die:
 No living thing, whate'er its food, feasts there,
 But the Chameleon, who can feast on air.
 No birds, except as birds of passage, flew;
 No bee was known to hum, no dove to coo:
 No streams, as amber smooth, as amber clear,
 Were seen to glide, or heard to warble here:
 Rebellion's spring, which thro' the country ran,
 Furnish'd with bitter draughts the steady clan;
 No flow'rs embalm'd the air but one White Rose,
 Which on the tenth of June by instinct blows,
 By instinct blows at morn, and when the shades
 Of drizzly eve prevail, by instinct fades.

"One, and but one, poor solitary cave,
 Too sparing of her favours, Nature gave;
 That one alone (hard tax on Scottish pride!)
 Shelter at once for man and beast supply'd.
 Their snares without entangling briers spread,
 And thistles, arm'd against the invader's head,
 Stood in close ranks, all entrance to oppose,
 Thistles! now held more precious than the Rose.
 All creatures which, on Nature's earliest plan,
 Were form'd to loathe and to be loath'd by man,
 Which ow'd their birth to nastiness and spite,
 Deadly to touch, and hateful to the sight;
 Creatures, which, when admitted in the ark,
 Their saviour shunn'd, and rankled in the dark,
 Found place within. Marking her noisome road
 With poison's trail, here crawl'd the bloated toad;
 There webs were spread of more than common size,
 And half-starv'd spiders prey'd on half-starv'd flies;
 In quest of food, efts strove in vain to crawl;
 Slugs, pinch'd with hunger, smear'd the slimy wall;
 The cave around with hissing serpents rung;
 On the damp roof unhealthy vapour hung;
 And Famine, by her children always known,
 As proud as poor, here fix'd her native throne.

"Here, for the sullen sky was overcast,
And summer shrunk beneath a wintry blast,
A native blast, which, arm'd with hail and rain,
Beat unrelenting on the naked swain,
The boys for shelter made: behind the sheep,
Of which those shepherds ev'ry day take keep,
Sickly crept on, and, with complainings rude,
On Nature seem'd to call and bleat for food.

"*Jockey*. Sith to this cave by tempest we're confin'd,
And within ken our flocks, under the wind,
Safe from the pelting of this per'lous storm,
Are laid among yon thistles, dry and warm,
What, Sawney! if by shepherd's art we try
To mock the rigour of this cruel sky!
What if we tune some merry roundelay!
Well dost thou sing, nor ill doth Jockey play.

"*Sawney*. Ah! Jockey, ill advisest thou, I wis,
To think of songs at such a time as this;
Sooner shall herbage crown these barren rocks,
Sooner shall fleeces clothe these ragged flocks,
Sooner shall want seize shepherds of the south,
And we forget to live from hand to mouth,
Than Sawney, out of season, shall impart
The songs of gladness with an aching heart.

"*Jockey*. Still have I known thee for a silly swain;
Of things past help what boots it to complain!
Nothing but mirth can conquer Fortune's spite;
No sky is heavy if the heart be light:
Patience is Sorrow's salve: what can't be cur'd,
So Donald right areeds, must be endur'd.

"*Sawney*. Full silly swain, I wot, is Jockey now;
How didst thou bear thy Maggy's falsehood! how,
When with a foreign loon she stole away,
Didst thou forswear thy pipe and shepherd's lay?
Where was thy boasted wisdom then, when I
Apply'd those proverbs which you now apply?

"*Jockey*. O she was bonny! all the Highlands round
Was there a rival to my Maggy found?
More precious (tho' that precious is to all)
Than the rare med'cine which we Brimstone call,
Or that choice plant, so grateful to the nose,
Which in I-know-not-what-far country grows,
Was Maggy unto me: dear do I rue
A lass so fair should ever prove untrue.

"*Sawney*. Whether with pipe or song to charm the ear,
Thro' all the land did Jamie find a peer!
Curs'd be that year by ev'ry honest Scot,
And in the shepherds' kalendar forgot,
That fatal year, when Jamie, hapless swain!
In evil hour forsook the peaceful plain:

Jamie, when our young laird discreetly fled,
 Was seiz'd, and hang'd till he was dead, dead, dead.
"Jockey. Full sorely may we all lament that day,
 For all were losers in the deadly fray;
 Five brothers had I on the Scottish plains,
 Well dost thou know were none more hopeful swains;
 Five brothers there I lost, in manhood's pride,
 Two in the field, and three on gibbets dy'd:
 Ah! silly swains! to follow war's alarms;
 Ah! what hath shepherd's life to do with arms?
"Sawney. Mention it not—There saw I strangers clad
 In all the honours of our ravish'd Plaid:
 Saw the Ferrara, too, our nation's pride,
 Unwilling grace the awkward victor's side.
 There fell our choicest youth, and from that day
 Mote never Sawney tune the merry lay;
 Bless'd those which fell! curs'd those which still survive!
 To mourn Fifteen renewed in Forty-five."

As our memory of our personal experiences about the period in Scottish history at which the above scene is laid is extremely obscure, we cannot take upon ourselves to speak authoritatively of the fidelity of the picture. But Churchill, we grieve to say it, was a regular—a thorough Cockney. The instant a Cockney opens his mouth, or puts pen to paper about Scotland, he stands confessed. Here Charles's attempt at the Scottish dialect betrays the taint. Not a single one of the words he chucklingly puts into the lips of Jockey and Sawney as characteristically Scoto-Arcadian, was ever heard or seen by the breechless swains of that pastoral realm. Never does an alien look so silly to the natives, be they who they may, as when instructing them in their own language, or mimicking the niceties and delicacies of its dialects. They pardonably think him little better than a fool; nor does he mend the matter much by telling them that he is satirical and a wit.

Considerable latitude in the article of language must be allowed to the poet, who presents to us engaged in dialogue two natives of a country where clothes and victuals are nearly unknown. "Rude must they be in speech—and little graced with the set phrase of peace." Churchill was bound to have conceived for them an utterance natural to their condition, as Shakspeare did for Caliban. But over and above the Cockneyisms committed by him, he makes them twaddle like middle-aged men in middle-sized towns, who had passed all their nights in blankets, and all their

days in breeches, with as liberal an allowance of food as parish paupers.

"To mock the rigour of this cruel sky,"
 "In all the honours of our ravish'd plaid"—
 "Unwilling grace the awkward victor's side,"

have here no dramatic propriety we opine—and show the slobberer.

The Satirist betrays the same poverty of invention in the sentiments as in the language of the Swains. They illustrate no concealed character—they reveal no latent truth.

"Rebellion's springs, which through the country ran,
 Furnish'd with bitter draughts *the steady clan*;"

and yet the swains are averse from war, and exclaim—

"Ah! silly swains! to follow war's alarms!
 Ah! what hath shepherd's life to do with arms!"

And, at the same time, they talk of—

"The Ferrara, too, our nation's pride."

The dialogue is throughout absolutely stupid. You are not made by it either to hate or despise the Swains, nor are you led to laugh at them; but lay down the satire for a minute or two, peevishly suspecting that you have been reading arrant nonsense.

You take up the trash again; and, being a Scotsman, you are perhaps not altogether quite so well pleased to find that it suddenly waxes into something very like poetry. The description of the cave had made you wince—why you know not; for nothing the least like it ever existed in Scotland or out of it; and your high cheek bones had tingled. The reprobate can write, you are forced to confess, while Christopher North holds up to your confusion the picture of Famine.

"Thus plain'd the boys, when from her throne of turf
 With boils emboss'd, and overgrown with scurf,
 Vile humours, which, in life's corrupted well,
 Mix'd at the birth, not abstinence could quell,
 Pale Famine rear'd the head; her eager eyes,
 Where hunger ev'n to madness seem'd to rise,
 Speaking aloud her throes and pangs of heart,
 Strain'd to get loose, and from their orbs to start.
 Her hollow cheeks were each a deep sunk cell,
 Where wretchedness and horror lov'd to dwell:
 With double rows of useless teeth supply'd,
 Her mouth from ear to ear extended wide,

Which, when for want of food her entrails pin'd,
 She op'd, and, cursing, swallow'd naught but wind:
 All shrivell'd was her skin; and here and there,
 Making their way by force, her bones lay bare:
 Such filthy sight to hide from human view
 O'er her foul limbs a tatter'd plaid she threw.

"'Cease,' cry'd the goddess, 'cease, despairing swains!
 And from a parent hear what Jove ordains.

"'Pent in this barren corner of the isle,
 Where partial Fortune never deign'd to smile,
 Like Nature's bastards, reaping for our share
 What was rejected by the lawful heir;
 Unknown amongst the nations of the earth,
 Or only known to raise contempt and mirth;
 Long free, because the race of Roman braves
 Thought it not worth their while to make us slaves,
 Then into bondage by that nation brought
 Whose ruin we for ages vainly sought,
 Whom still with unslak'd hate we view, and still,
 The pow'r of mischief lost, retain the will;
 Consider'd as the refuse of mankind,
 A mass till the last moment left behind,
 Which frugal Nature-doubted, as it lay,
 Whether to stamp with life or throw away;
 Which, form'd in haste, was planted in this nook,
 But never enter'd in Creation's book,
 Branded as traitors, who, for love of gold,
 Would sell their God, as once their king they sold;
 Long have we borne this mighty weight of ill,
 These vile injurious taunts, and bear them still;
 But times of happier note are now at hand,
 And the full promise of a better land;
 There, like the sons of Isr'el, having trode
 For the fix'd term of years ordain'd by God,
 A barren desert, we shall seize rich plains,
 Where milk and honey flows, and plenty reigns:
 With some few natives join'd, some pliant few,
 Who worship int'rest, and our track pursue;
 There shall we, tho' the wretched people grieve,
 Ravage at large, nor ask the owners' leave.

"'For us the earth shall bring forth her increase;
 For us the flocks shall wear a golden fleece;
 Fat beeves shall yield us dainties not our own,
 And the grape bleed a nectar yet unknown:
 For our advantage shall their harvest grow,
 And Scotsmen reap what they disdain'd to sow:
 For us the sun shall climb the eastern hill;
 For us the rain shall fall, the dew distil:
 When to our wishes Nature cannot rise,
 Art shall be tasked to grant us fresh supplies;

His brawny arm shall drudging Labour strain,
 And for our pleasure suffer daily pain:
 Trade shall for us exert her utmost pow'rs,
 Her's all the toil, and all the profit ours:
 For us the oak shall from his native steep
 Descend, and fearless travel thro' the deep;
 The sail of commerce, for our use unfurl'd,
 Shall waft the treasures of each distant world;
 For us sublimer heights shall science reach;
 For us their statesmen plot, their churchmen preach:
 Their noblest limbs of counsel we'll disjoint,
 And, mocking, new ones of our own appoint:
 Devouring War, imprison'd in the north,
 Shall at our call in horrid pomp break forth:
 And when, his chariot wheels with thunder hung,
 Fell Discord, braying with her brazen tongue,
 Death in the van, with Anger, Hate, and Fear,
 And Desolation stalking in the rear,
 Revenge, by Justice guided, in his train,
 He drives impetuous o'er the trembling plain,
 Shall at our bidding quit his lawful prey,
 And to meek, gentle, gen'rous Peace give way.

"Think not, my sons! that this so bless'd estate
 Stands at a distance on the roll of Fate;
 Already big with hopes of future sway,
 Ev'n from this cave I scent my destin'd prey.
 Think not that this dominion o'er a race,
 Whose former deeds shall Time's last annals grace,
 In the rough place of peril must be sought,
 And with the lives of thousands dearly bought:
 No—fool'd by cunning, by that happy art
 Which laughs to scorn the blund'ring hero's heart,
 Into the snare shall our kind neighbours fall,
 With open eyes, and fondly give us all."

Along side of any one of the masterpieces of Dryden or Pope, this, perhaps the most vigorous thing of Churchill's, is seen to be a daub. Yet Cockney connoisseurs still think it a fine picture. When fresh from the easel, it was thus praised by a metropolitan critic:

"You'll own the great Churchill possesses, I hope,
 More fancy than Cowley, more numbers than Pope;
 More strength, too, than Dryden—for, think on what's past,
 He has not only rivall'd, but beat them at last."

A hearty national prejudice is no bad foundation for a Poem. It implies one great requisite of success—a secure large sympathy. This "trusted home" animates the poet; and a reception, answering to the confidence, awaits the work. Moreover, ungrounded or exaggerated as these depreciations

and antipathies are likely to be, they usually spring out of some deep-laid element in the character of those who entertain them, and have thus the vital warmth and strength that feed poetry, and an original truth of nature mixed up amongst fallacies of opinion. Caricatured representation is the proper vehicle. For Censure is then half disarmed, when to her exception, "This is not so," the reply lies upon the face of the performance, "Neither is it offered for true." The hyperbole of the phrase covers the distortion of the thinking. If we are to find fault with Churchill's "Prophecy of Famine," it must be upon some other ground than the injustice or cruelty of the attack upon poor Scotland, or the hardness of the hits delivered, it may be, by a fist gloved in iron.

Who grudges the attack? Not Sawney himself, if it is made in masterly style. A magnanimous combatant, who has the true enthusiasm of the fight, admires the skill of the stroke that threatens him with defeat or death. Spite, malice, aversion, enmity, are not ingratiating demonstrations. Far from it. Ill-will is naturally met with ill-will. But besides that which is unavoidably self-regarding in such a relation of parties, room is open for views of a more general feature, of a more generous complexion. John Bull scowls at Sawney, and makes mouths at his oatmeal diet, with lips to which the memory of his own roast-beef cleaves. The last-mentioned dish is not altogether unknown north of the Tweed. But John Bull knows not the unimaginable fact, or knew it not, for the barrier is now widely broken down. Sawney has humour enough to be amused by the writhing apprehension of dry and lean fare which deforms the well-fed and jocund face of the bacon boker.

There is in the description and Amabean lament of the two gaunt and shivering young Arcadians, and in the cave of the tutelary Goddess, Famine, the intention at least of the picturesque and poetical. The fault is, that the thing has no bringing out or completeness. It is incomposite—as a plan, unintelligible. Are the *dramatis personæ*, Sawney, Jockey, and the Goddess, with Sawney's love, the whole population of Scotland? Do the two lads, and their sheep, and Famine, occupy the same sole cave which is all the houses in Scotland? Is it a comprehensive Allegory under the guise of a pastoral idyl? A ground is laid; and it is easy to conceive that a Hogarth in verse, with his stored eye, and that hand

mimic and creative, which, by some unmitigated touch of nature, sets upon capricious extravagance the known seal of truth, might have finished a picture which experience itself would have half-believed in spite of its conviction, that never had there been such an hungered race. But such a Hogarth in verse was not Churchill. Upon the ground laid, a Satire might have been made out by such a genius, exaggerated, witty, poetical—pleasing even to the posterity of the victims! But instead of crowded ideas, here are but three or four. This writing does, in fact, not express the national prejudices of South Britain against North Britain. It expresses the zeal of party and of a partisan. One can hardly conceive such an ignorance of Scotland in England, as that a man of ability, wishing to traduce and ridicule the country, should sit down contented under such a paucity of mischievous information. He writes under one simple rule—negation. To deny food, to deny clothes, to deny houses, to deny sunshine, grass, rivers even, requires no mental effort of any kind, and is the part of a dunce and an ignorant. For anything positive, the Scotch are proud, have high cheek-bones, and love brimstone and rebellion. That is the amount of the picture. Famine consoles the two hungry lads who mourn over the Fifteen and the Forty-five, with prophesying the invasion and conquest of England by the Bute Administration—a glorious hope, a national redress, and a private filling of empty purses and stomachs. Churchill was himself poverty-stricken in mind, during the composition of this blunder, to a degree that never befell any true poet.

An Englishman of this day must be puzzled to bring back the time when Scotland was so completely a *terra incognita* to her sister, as that this rude and unlearned caricature could pass. Indeed he hardly understands the hate—he to whom prose and verse, from one great hand, and poetry profusely scattered like flowers all over the soil from another, have made hallowed the land of romance, and of dreams more beautiful than romance, and for whom the words, "Caledonia, stern and wild," mean anything but repulsion. But one must remember, that poetry was at the time at low ebb, almost stagnant in England, and that anything that looked like an image was a prodigy. If Gray and Collins now and then struck the lyre, they stood apart from the prevailing prosaic and common-place tone of the times. An Englishman of to-day knows the name of Homer by one of the most popular

tragedies on his stage, if not one of the most vigorous, yet, amongst modern dramas, one of the most affecting; and he wonders when that name is introduced by Churchill for the purpose of aggravating the contempt of Scotland, represented as a region Boeotian in wit, quite as much as by its atmosphere. He understands by what attraction Collins addressed to Home his "Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands." Political hatred, the dislike, the indignation which may have been widely enough diffused through the nation, at the interloping of Scotchmen in the high places of power and emolument—this was the sentiment in the national bosom which gave a meaning to the poem, and found it a reception. Such a sentiment is not scrupulous or critical—it is passionate merely—and asks not the happinesses of humour, wit, fancy, of the graphical and the characteristic. It asks bitter animosity, and vile vituperation, and is satisfied.

The individuality of a nation is curiously made up. The country which they inhabit makes a part of it, the most easily understood. Their manners, customs, and institutions make another part of it, much of which is outward, picturesque, and easily seen. Their history, that which they have done, and that which they have endured, makes a part. And lastly, that which runs through all, rises out of all, animates all, their proper personality, their intellectual and moral character, makes a part—and now you have the whole. We demand of the writer who will, in earnest, paint the people, that he shall know all these things extensively, variously, profoundly. And of the Satirist, who will hold up the nation to dislike and to laughter, that he too shall show he knows them, their defects and their deformities, their crimes and their customs, their sins and their sorrows, their sufferings and their absurdities, their monstrosities and their misfortunes, God's curse or of their own consciences, that may have stricken their country and their condition, and starved the paupers in body and in soul. Such chastisement might be terrible, and not undeserved. But to inflict it, was far beyond the power of poor Charles Churchill.

"Waft me, some Muse, to Tweed's enchanting stream,
Where all the little Loves and Graces dream:
Where, slowly winding, the dull waters creep,
And seem themselves to own the power of sleep;
Where on the surface lead, like feathers, swims;
There let me bathe my yet unhallowed limbs,

As once a Syrian bathed in Jordan's flood;
 Wash off my native stains, correct that blood
 Which mutinies at call of English pride,
 And, deaf to prudence, rolls a patriot tide."

Ay, much the better would he have been of a dip in the Tweed. He was a big, burly fellow; but, though no great swimmer, he would have found it buoyant after a debauch. His native stains, washed off, would, alas! have sadly discoloured the Angler's Delight. Worse than a hundred Sheep-washings. But at one gleam of the showery bow, the waters would have resumed their lustre. He was the last man in the world who ought to have abused brimstone; for his soul had the Itch. A wallow in the sweet mould—the pure mire of Cardronna Mains—on a dropping day, would have been of service to his body, bloated with foul blood. Smeared with that sanative soil, he might have been born again—no more a leper.

"I remember well," says Dr. Kippis, "that he dressed his younger son [the son of his wife, not of his mistress for whom he abandoned her] in a Scottish plaid, like a little Highlander, and carried him everywhere in that garb. The boy being asked by a gentleman with whom I was in company, why he was clothed in such a manner, answered *with great vivacity*, —'Sir, my father hates the Scotch, and does it to plague them.'" For a father to dress up his son in the garb of a people despised and detested with perpetual scunner, seems an odd demonstration either of party spite or of paternal fondness—about as sensible as, on the anniversary of his birthday, in compliment to his mother, to have dressed him up like a monkey.

The Patriot Satirist! The question inevitably obtrudes itself—what is the pointing of destiny, which singles out Churchill for the indignant protector, in verse, of England's freedom and welfare? What calls his hand into the van of battle, with the strong lance of justice laid in rest, to tilt against the ill-defended breast of poor, proud, hungry, jacobinical, place-loving, coin-attached, and coin-attaching, muse-left, gibbet-favoured, tartan-clad, sulphur-scented, and thistle-growing Scotland? The hero of liberty, the self-offered martyr for the rights and the wrongs of a great people, should carry on his front, one might suppose, some evidence of the over-mastering spirit which, like a necessity, finds him out, and throws him, as if a lot-drawn champion, alone into the jaws and jeopardy of the war.

It should be one, of whom, if you knew him yet obscure, you might divine and say, "This is *his* hour—*his* is the mind that consecrates its possessor to a consecrated cause, that discriminates, essentially as the spirits of light are divided from the spirits of darkness, the lover of his country from the factious partisan, and from the seditious demagogue." There should be a private life and character that but repeat themselves in the public ones, on a bolder and gigantic scale. Else how ready does the apprehension rise that the professed hostility to unjust men in power is no more than the reluctance of an ill-disciplined spirit, under the offence and constraint of institutions which set superiors over his head, and gall him by bridling an unruly will;—whilst the clamorous zeal for the general good is purely the choice of the staking gamester between red and black, and the preference of the million-headed patron to the cheapener with a few heads or with one. The two known traits, which largely comprehend the private life of Churchill, do not prepossess one in his favour. He left his profession, the church; and he exchanged his wife, after many years' cohabitation, for a mistress; two paramount desecrations unhappily met. And the trumpet-call to the war-field of patriotism sings but uncheerfully, when the blast is winded by the breath of Wilkes.

When the shame of England burns in the heart of Cowper, you must believe him; for through that heart rolled the best of England's blood. But Churchill! Faugh!

THE END.



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